

The holy city (Benares)

Rajani Ranjan Sen

PLATE I



H. H. Sir Prabhu Narain Singh, G. C. I. E.,
Maharaja of Benares.

Frontispiece.

THE HOLY CITY

(BENARES)

[*With 58 Illustrations and a Map*]

BY

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"A nation that does not take a just pride in its own annals must be wanting in self-respect."

—Dr. Rash Behari Ghosh.

CHITTAGONG

1912

In

Sacred Memory

of

My Ever Beloved

Parents

in Heaven

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TO THE READER

"Never resort to the argument : 'I do not know this,—therefore it is false'.

"We must study to know, know to comprehend, and comprehend to judge".

—Narada.

I HAD little idea while paying a flying visit to Benares for the first time during the X'mas recess in 1909 that I should have to put my fugitive recollections into writing. I feel conscious however that a sketch like this may be of interest to those who proceed to that ancient place with an open mind and who have no definite notion as to what in reality to expect to find there. Random rambles, I believe, are neither much illuminating nor very edifying in their effects in the absence of a capacity in the wanderer for taking an intelligent interest in what is observed, owing to the want of requisite equipment in the shape of needful informations. I felt this myself, and hence a hope that this little sketch of the holy city might be of some use to tourists like me is my only apology for bringing it to the light of day in spite of the diffidence I feel in doing so.

"In wealth, population, dignity and sanctity," this city, writes Macaulay, "was among the foremost of Asia". As the oldest and the only *living* city in

existence where the ancient and the modern meet together, it stretches its memories to the ages of pre-historic antiquity and has managed to outlive, as none other has done, the inevitable ravages of time and every other destructive agency. Speaking of its antiquity Rev. Mr. Sherring in his '*Sacred City of the Hindus*,' observes :

> "Twenty-five centuries ago at the least, it was famous. "When Babylon was struggling with Nineveh for supremacy, "when Tyre was planting her colonies, when Athens was "growing in strength, before Rome had become known, or "Greece had contested with Persia, or Cyrus had added "lustre to the Persian monarchy, or Nebuchadnezzar had "captured Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Judæa had been "carried away into captivity, she had already risen to greatness, "if not glory".

To the world abroad Benares has been known as the place of the greatest religious sanctity in all India—that land, pre-eminently, where the religious element supervenes and transfuses itself into the most ordinary vocations of daily life. Whatever changes that element might have undergone owing to our contact with the Western nations, their religion and educational system,—and perhaps it would not be too much to add,—owing to our own ignorance, apathy and consequent want of aptitude to grasp the real underlying the visible,—still the mind loves to linger over the glories that are past, and there is much of charm and attraction in old associations of by-gonè days. And steeped as we have been in the Western lore and filled with

preconceived notions and ideals of foreign infusion, we know but little of our precious possessions in the treasured wisdom of our hoary sages, and perhaps care still less to know or hardly have leisure enough to spare for the purpose. Yet, even in spite of our altered tastes and views, a sigh of deep regret would not unoften involuntarily come forth for opportunities neglected and the lateness of the hour of the mind's awakening, and make us feel how apt we are to be carried away by the glitter of things exotic, forgetful of the vast unexplored mines of our own Golcondas hiding gems of purest rays serene and of far brighter lustre than the sparkle of the fine-cut stones of other lands so catching to the eye !

Varied would be the nature of the sights that would meet your eyes in this ancient city—sublime and fantastic, elevating as well as queer. Advance with a scoffing predisposition and a supercilious contempt for what you may not understand, and things will take complexion from your temperament, and enough will there be for affording you amusement and means of cavilling and reviling. But why leave the honey and seek the sores which incidences of time must inevitably cause ? Approach rather with a feeling of respect and in a spirit of considerate sympathy making due allowances for the deformities of age, and with an earnest desire for peering into the inner nature of what you see, and enough shall you find for reflection, enlightenment and enjoyment. The apparent freckles and pallidness of age will

then pass away from your vision revealing the cherubic lineaments of the earlier days harbouring the soul immaculate and immortal! 'Every religion is an expression of Divine Wisdom' and its study is surely preferable to an off-hand condemnation.

Here I must take leave of you lest I grow too tiresome. My plan has not been to furnish quite a complete and exhaustive enumeration of all that you may meet with in this city, but only to offer hints and outlines just to put you on your track, leaving to yourself the option of pondering over the esoteric or the secular aspects and phases of things as you choose and of studying the subjects that catch your fancy as you like. My object has not been to provide you simply with thoughts but rather to put you in the way of thinking.

For the help I received from the authorities I consulted in making this sketch, I have to express my indebtedness and grateful acknowledgements; and I embrace this opportunity of expressing my deep obligations to Mr. A. Venis, Principal, and Mr. C. M. Mulvany, Professor of Queen's College, Benares, and Col. Vindeswari Prasad Singh, Chief Commandant, Benares State Army, and Rai Bahadur Dr. Nabin Chandra Dutt of this place for many valuable suggestions and informations with which they favored me; and I am also very grateful to His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur of Benares and Dr. J. Ph. Vogel, Offg. Director-General of Archæological Survey of India, Simla, and Messrs. Saeed Brothers of Benares, for their

kind permission to reproduce some of the photos of Benares scenes which they graciously presented to me. And to Babu Nobo Kumar Chakravarti of Benares, who took me all over the city, I have to offer my sincerest thanks for his kindness and troubles, as also to my very esteemed and revered friend Mr. A. F. Dowling of Chittagong whose constant encouragement has helped me on in my work. If this little volume into which I have attempted to compress as much information as has been available, is thought useful and interesting, I shall consider myself amply recompensed.

Chittagong,
July, 1912.

R. S.

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PART I

THE HOLY CITY

(BENARES)

PART FIRST

Chapter I

TO THE CITY

"As a queen she (Benares) has ever received the willing homage of her subjects scattered all over India; as a lover, she has secured their affection and regard."
—M. A. Sherring.

BY the Bombay Mail—Grand Chord—lies the most convenient route from Calcutta; and it is pleasant to watch through the window as the rushing iron horse pierces the serried darkness and emanations of electric brilliance from the well-lit carriages shimmer along the straight pathway converting it, as it were, into a rippling glistening streamlet. It is about ten in the evening now, and the gentle rocking soon lulls you into a disturbed slumber—half-way between a doze and actual sleep.

Dim as the purple twilight looms in its subdued brightness in the far-off east, a few bleak rocky hillocks appear on the right and left interspersed

with tufts of green sprouting up here and there. Presently the Falgu with its shallow expanse of scanty water comes into view with the Gaya temples and buildings on the distant left studding the gentle curve of its sandy bank. Wide awake at the peep of early dawn you come to a halt at the GAYA Station, and in a few minutes a turbaned boy clad in the correct style in spotless white brings in his tea-tray and offers you *chhota-hazri* if you would care to have it.

The sight of a chain of small hillocks bordering the horizon on the left with the tall spire of some ancient shrine pointing heavenward in the distance and the pleasing scent of the neighbouring fields borne on the bracing morning breeze, give you a sense of welcome relief after the closeness of the dusty and smoky atmosphere of the oppressive brick and mortar you have left behind. A fresh verdure following the night's dewy bath seems to have clothed the expansive fields on the right and on the left as you dash through them.

Soon enough the winding SONE begins to glisten to the view, and presently, with slackened speed you are upon the magnificent bridge itself—something over ten thousand feet in length ! [1] Famed to be the longest in existence in the world,—that over the Scottish Tay only excepted,—it is a lasting monument of the

The Sone

(1) 10,052 feet.

triumph of the engineer's art that harnessed the broad river thus in the concluding year of the past century. As over the rolling billowy water—a couple of miles in width—the iron dragon glides on dragging its serpentine tail behind, puffing and snorting and leaving a trail of dense dark smoke hovering in the air above, the grandeur of the scene would be unrivalled and the view superb and imposing! But in the winter the shallow river is nearly dry and tiny islets of sand in upraised patches appear on its bed on either side overgrown with moss. Near to the white sandy expanse on the edge you now approach, and your vehicle bounds with a renewed start and a vigorous pull.

Low hillocks and extensive fields green with fertility now catch your eyes, and dense mango-groves lying scattered at intervals furnish variety to the scene. Patches of ripening yellow here and streaks of snowy white there amidst the surrounding green look like the pearly smile lighting up the features of some buxom darksome beauty. On the fringes of the spacious fields bright with their wealth of yellow and green—the reward of a responsive Nature to the labouring humanity—are high-walled wells sunk deep into the bowels of Mother Earth; and panting bullocks are observed tugging at the ropes attached to primitive pulleys depending from the most archaic structures, and drawing up huge vessels filled with the milk of Nature to drench the parched soil. Up

above the adjoining depression where the excess finds its way, there hovers a tiny heron poised for a moment upon its pair of silver-white pinions relieved in bold contrast against the dark-blue sky, and presently alights gracefully upon the marshy ground.

Clusters of squalid-looking huts lying on the road side, with rotting thatched roofs and mat-walls daubed with mud, give you some idea of the general poverty of the masses here and fill your sympathetic heart with pity, perchance, for the people who have to live such miserable lives in the midst of all this munificent gift of a bountiful Nature in the shape of a plenteous yield of all that can shoot out of her bed. It is occasions like these that bring forcibly to mind the plight of the weather-bound ancient mariner who saw 'water everywhere, but not a drop to drink,' and make one feel that to the poverty-stricken people here all this plenty is but brine. But a rail-road journey is not perhaps leisurely enough to arouse an inclination to cogitate upon such a theme and to ponder over the causes. So, for the present it must all be assigned to that easiest and safest of all solutions—*kismet* !

The engine slows down, whistles out a choked scream and fetches a deep breath ; and at last it rolls into the MOGAL SERAI Station and comes to a stand. Here you must change, and pass across with bag and baggage along the high overhead bridge to the

Mogal Serai

platform opposite and get into some Oudh-Rohilkhand car and wait till you are hurried off again.

Time, however, would not hang heavy, for there are diversions enough to engage your attention. Unique carved brassware and curiously-fashioned horn and ivory, earthen statuettes and pretty flower-vases, bundles of walking-sticks and even up-to-date novels and the latest morning papers—such is the strange medley of articles that catch your eyes, and their vendors come up and pester you to accept their eagerly-proferred presents, for consideration of course. Presently, the fruiterers with tempting ripe guavas and plump luscious oranges walk along hawking their wares; small urchins with matches and cigarettes, cigars and betel-leaves, scream out in their piercing treble; and a sweets-seller soon passes by and keeps running onward in his everlasting course with a large uncovered wooden tray upon his head, followed by a companion waving an upraised stick to scare away the kites flying above.

Even the greatest of ordeals, however, has a termination. So this new train also starts at last and proceeds with you towards the holiest of the holy cities you are longing to see. The same verdure and luxuriance of Nature's bounty all around again, and groves of various trees now grow more abundant. As you pass the SASSERAM Station, the large white dome of Sher Khan's tomb with its low

minarets around peeps through the greeneries on the left and seems to play at hide-and-seek as you move onward. That heroic Behar Chief who conquered Bengal and drove Emperor Humayun out of India in the middle of the sixteenth century has left one lasting memorial that serves to commemorate his name among posterity to this day. His GRAND TRUNK ROAD runs still from Bengal to the Punjab, and in his time mosques and caravanserais both for Hindus and Mahomedans stood by its side at convenient distances for the use and comfort of the way-farers. It was then traversed by millions of foot-sore and weary pilgrims to the sacred cities in the North-West, and upon it numbers had probably sunk down breathless and even dropped dead from sheer exhaustion! Hallowed by associations such as these, it now runs parallel to the rail-road on the left—neat and trim and sheltered under the cool shade of the over-arching trees flanking its edges. Mango-topes in the distance planted in orderly symmetrical rows with their rounded leafy crowns standing above the upright trunks cause frequent changes in the scenic background of green that variegates the blue horizon.

The Grand Trunk Road

We now cross the little KARMANASA streamlet. Presently a middle-sized camel struts on over Sher Khan's Road swaying its long neck from side to

side and nibbling the leaves from the branches of dwarfish trees; and anon follow a swarm of pigs urged on by a small child nude as the hand of Nature had fashioned it. There, a little way off saunters a straggler keeping to the shady side of the road, and even an *ekka* skips on in its jolting gait, followed by that picture of patience, the washerman's ass, carrying a pair of large bulging bundles hanging from its back and the happy rider sitting astride upon them and evidently singing snatches of some light popular ditty in a hoarse cracked voice.

The fine towering steeple of the Durga Temple at Ramnagar now raises itself above the distant foliage on the left. A pleasant half-hour would soon bring you to the broad DUFFERIN BRIDGE that took five years (1882-1887) in stretching itself across the holy Ganges, supplanting thereby the bridge of boats that existed there before and costing nearly forty-nine lakhs of rupees. Grand and imposing it looks upon its half a dozen massive stone supports with its couple of wide footpaths quite three quarters of a mile in length (Plate X, 3).

The sacred water of the holy river, with glimpses of towering temples standing on her bank, now gleams into view through some breaks of the foliage in the remote horizon. Forward as you approach, a grand panorama of the long-looked-for city, spreading out over an expanse of some four extending miles

in the form of a mighty crescent now breaks upon your wondering gaze.

Upon a high ridge of *kankar* on the western bank and in front of the greenish bay of limpid water she stands like a vast amphitheatre, with her domes and spires and turrets up above the flights of numberless steps, extending along the winding stone-paved river-bank far as the eye can reach.

First Glimpses

Hurried on over the bridge, the crescent-like arc now widens and becomes more defined, and the twin towers of *Madhoji-ka-deora* stand out prominent among the white and gold-tipped spires clustered all around. The tiny Baranā to the right and the hazy Asi to the extreme end on the south there join the sacred river and enclose with her—figuring the resplendent crescent moon on Siva's forehead—what is known as the ancient and holy KASI, the city founded by Siva himself and fabled to be resting upon the points of his trident which no earthquake can shake and reminiscent of a glorified vision of the sacred manifestation of Annapurnā and Visweswara as the originating and ever-sustaining Energy of the Universe!

Here then is KASI—the highest in sanctity, the thrice-blessed spot beneath the heavens, associated with an ideal of all that is pure and holy, the dreamland of a devout Hindu's longing, the dispenser of salvation from earthly existence and repeated births,

and the very abode of peace and joy eternal! Here must you alight if you will visit the holy city.

Having covered no less than four hundred and seventy-six miles of the iron track at a stretch —though by the Grand Trunk Road it would only be four hundred and thirty-two,—you may now pause awhile to take breath. About this Kasi station lie the ruins of the old Fort of the ancient King Banâr, the last of the Gaharwar princes, who ruled over Kasi and the kingdom of Kanouj. "*Benāres*", the modern anglicised name of the city, has been considered to be associated with the fort of this king, who is reputed to have rebuilt the city also in the twelfth century A. D. The older name "*Bārānasi*" seems to be compounded of the names of the two streams, *Baranā*—and not Barna as it is usually spelt—and *Asi*, meandering round the city by the north and the south and emptying themselves into the holy Ganges. [1] The other name "*Kāsi*," which is

Nomenclature

(1) This is supported by the **Va'mana Purana** which notes the words of Vishnu in the following terms:—

" योऽसौ ब्रह्माण्डके पुण्ये मदंशप्रभवोऽव्ययः ।
प्रयाति वसते नित्यं योगशायीति विश्रुतः ॥

the oldest one, is supposed to be derived from the *Kāsis* tribe of the Aryans who first settled here three thousand years ago. According to the erudite editor of the *Viswakosha* the city came to be called "Kāsi" after the name of *Kāshi* or *Kāsya* (the son of Rājā *Kāsh*) who was the first king of this place. Situate 25° 18' N. Lat. and 83° 1' E. Long. — it is now the head-quarters of the Benares district of the United Provinces and covers an area in acres of three thousand and a half,[1] and in course of the Census of 1901 answered for the housing of nearly two lakhs and ten thousand citizens, among whom over a lakh and a half were Hindus, and over half a lakh professed allegiance to the Prophet, and about twelve hundred were Christians.[2]

चरणाद्दक्षिणात्तस्य विनिर्गता सरिद्वरा ।
विश्रुता वरणेत्येव सर्व्वपापहरा शुभा ॥
सव्यादन्या द्वितीया च असिरित्येव विश्रुता ।
ते उभे च सरिच्छ्रेष्ठे लोकपूज्ये बभूवतुः ॥
तयोर्मध्ये तु यो देशस्तत् क्षेत्रं योगशायिनः ।
त्रैलोक्यप्रवरतीर्थं सर्व्वपापप्रमोचनं ॥
न तादृशं हि गगने न भूम्यां न रसातले ।
तत्रास्ति नगरी पुण्या ख्याता वाराणसी शुभा ॥ "

(1) 3448 acres.

(2) 151,488 Hindus, 53,677 Mahomedans, 4176 Christians and others, making up 2,09,331 in all. In course of the last

Well-drained and standing dry on the high rocky bank sloping to the river, the city is reputed to enjoy a pleasant equable climate, with the exception of the extremes of heat and cold during some portions of the summer and winter. Its health is no doubt due to the purity of the water of the Ganges which people use for bathing and drinking purposes even in preference to the filtered tap-water from the Water-works inaugurated here by Sir Auckland Colvin in 1892. Mark Twain, speaking of some tests by an expert scientist in Government employ at Agra in connection with the water of the Ganges, remarks in his '*More Tramps Abroad*:'

Climate and Ganges Water

"He added swarm after swarm of cholera "germs to this (Ganges) water ; within six hours "they always died, to the last sample. Repeatedly "he took pure well water which was barren of "animal life and put into it a few cholera germs ; "they always began to propagate at once and "always within six hours they swarmed and were "numberable by millions upon millions. For "ages the Hindus have had absolute faith that "the water of the Ganges was utterly pure, "could not be defiled by any contact whatso-"ever and infallibly made pure and clean what-"soever thing touched it. They still believe it,

Census of 10th March 1911, however, there had been a decrease in the population by 10,456, and the total stood at 198,859.

"and that is why they bathe in it and drink it. "The Hindus have been laughed at these many "generations, but the laughter will need to modify "itself a little from now on. How did they "find out the water's secret in those ancient "ages? Had they germ-scientists then? We "do not know. We know that they had a civili-"zation long before we emerged from savagery".[1]

If you are now refreshed and in proper trim, we may proceed to have a look at the city and shall first take the road leading to the Dasaswamedh quarter. The massive iron gates at Rajghat opening towards the city lead us into a dusty road lined with modest unassuming houses with the wrinkles of age stamped upon most of them. A small market-place—VISWESWARGUNGE BAZAR—soon appears with

Visweswar-gunge Bazar

(1) In confirmation of this may be quoted what the Indian Medical Gazette notes:—"It would appear as if modern science was coming to the aid of the ancient tradition in maintaining a special blessedness of the water of the Ganges. Mr. E. H. Henkin, in the preface to the fifth edition of his excellent pamphlet 'On the Cause and Prevention of Cholera,' tes as follows:—"Since I originally wrote this pamphlet I have discovered that the water of the Ganges and the Jumna is hostile to the growth of the cholera microbe, not only owing to the absence of food materials, but owing to actual presence of an antiseptic that has the power of destroying this microbe. At present I can make no suggestion as to the origin of this mysterious antiseptic."

pulse-shops and flour-stalls ranged on either side and various other necessaries of life piled about in utter disregard of all order. Huge lumbering carts labouring heavily along the badly rutted pathway, each drawn by three sturdy bullocks with another tied behind to serve as a relay and being itself tugged on in its trail, make a curious spectacle.

Smiling at the oddity as you proceed onward, the MUNICIPAL or the MAIDAGUN GARDEN comes to view on the right, neat and snug in its iron enclosure, and the delicate perfume of roses fills the air near about. Roses of varied hues and species laid out in a variety of designs take up all available space inside, and a fine *jet-de-eau* playing at one end adds to the beauty of this enjoyable nook. It was the Maharajah of Vizianagram who brought it into being in 1866 and presented it to the people of Benares. A tank in the middle of the garden with stone steps running down from the banks into its clear water below is famed to be the terrestrial remnant of the heavenly MANDAKINI stream now shrunk into such circumscribed and diminutive proportions. Adjoining this garden is the hall of the NAGRI PRACHARINI SABHA founded in 1893 with the object of popularising the Hindi language. Patronised by Government with a grant in aid of research it has a fine collection of Hindi manuscripts and has already given sufficient evidence of its usefulness in the shape of the publication of

Municipal Garden

Nagri Pracharini Sabha.

a number of works in Hindi comprising Hindu and Buddhistic literature and philosophy.

To the left of the road lie the TELEGRAPH OFFICE and the POLICE KOTWALI in the same compound, both of them fine-looking modern structures. Close by in a large compound of green lawn is the ALFRED HALL—the Benares Town Hall—an imposing pile in mixed Hindu and Gothic style enclosing a long splendid hall with a *dais* on the further end and a gallery approached by flights of stairs on either side near the entrance. This also owes its existence to the munificence of the Maharaja of Vizianagram who had it built (1873-1875) to commemorate the visit of H. R. H. Prince Alfred to this city in 1870. It contains a fine portrait in oil of the Maharaja and a marble bust of the Hon. Raja Deo Narain Singh, late member of the Legislative Council of India, and was opened in 1876 by the then Prince of Wales (the late King Edward VII).

Alfred Hall

We next approach the CHAUK, practically the centre of the city and the largest mart and emporium of trade in Benares, extending over a wide area along the main road with a number of narrow lanes running into the interior, which are lined with lofty buildings full of all kinds of merchandise. The most noted and attractive quarter here is the *Thatteri Bazar* glittering with shining repousse and embossed brassware and silver goods of wonderful workmanship for which Benares has ever been famous. As

Indigenous Products

you advance forward, wooden articles inlaid with brass and various kinds of fretted woodwork engage your attention for a time ; and interspersed among the indigenous industrial products may also be noticed the woven fabrics of Manchester and various cheap shining tinsels with the hall-mark of "*Made in Germany*" upon them. It is the gold-embroidered kincobs and silk brocades, however, that are the most beautiful products of the Benares looms deserving prominent notice, as also shawls and fine embroidery and gold filigree work for which Benares has ever been noted in the world's marts. This weaving industry, it is estimated, furnishes employment to no less than twenty-five thousand people here.

Trade

From the very earliest of times Benares had been famed as a great commercial city, and in testimony thereof, Ralph Fitch in 1585 characterised it as "a great towne, and a great store of cloth is made there of cotton." Bishop Heber in his "*Narrative*" also speaks of Benares as "the great mart where the shawls of the north, and the diamonds of the south and the muslins of Dacca and the Eastern Provinces center." Her wealth and activity even in the earlier part of the last century had called forth the following eulogium from Macaulay's pen : "All along the shores of the venerable stream lay great fleets of vessels laden with rich merchandise. From the looms of Benares went forth the most delicate silks that adorned the halls of St. James

and of Versailles; and in the bazaars, the muslins of Bengal and the sabres of Oude were mingled with the jewels of Golconda and the shawls of Cashmere."

We next come to the large square with the imposing building on the right where the Chauk Police is stationed. Vendors of various small wares and brightly lacquered wooden toys have set their stalls here in the open; and the crowd is rather thick and is being constantly dispersed right and left by the passing *ekkas* aud other vehicles with their drivers shouting at the the top of their voice, "*Hutto, Bheiya*" (Move away, Brother) and thus adding to the babel of noises filling the place.

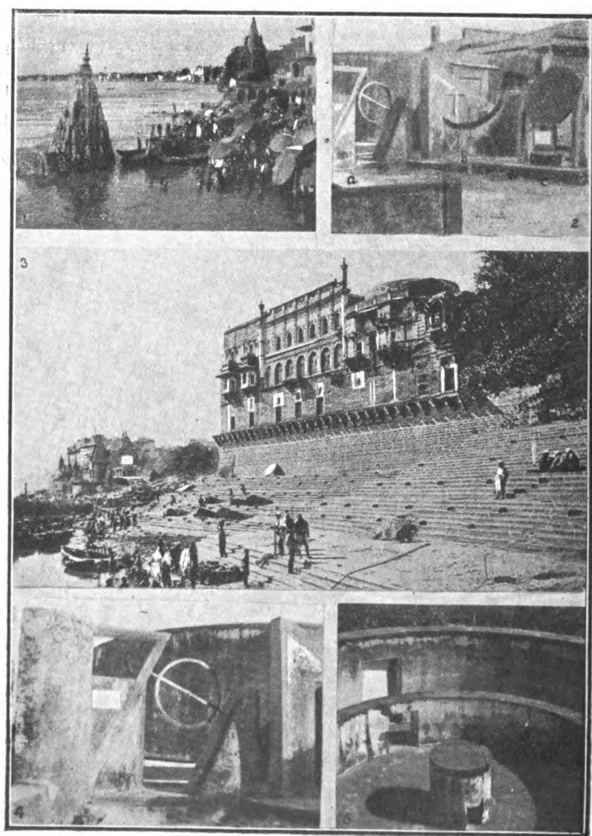
A few steps forward on the left is the fine entrance to the nice little patch of garden of the CARMICHAEL LIBRARY with a beautiful fountain squirting jets of cool clear water around. In this cosy peaceful retreat is a well-stocked library with reading rooms. This interesting institution dates from 1870 and was first inaugurated by Rana Sanga Thakur Shaheb, a Reis of Benares, with the aid of public subscriptions. Three years later it was enlarged at the instance of Mr. Carmichael, the then Commissioner, whose name it bears, and it has now an annual income of nearly Rs. 2,000.

The Carmichael Library

Past the GODOWLIA CHURCH of the Church Mission Society on the right, we may now visit the famous astronomical observatory, the Man Mandil.



PLATE II



1. The Crescent Bank.
2. The Chakra (a), the Samrat (b), and the Narivalaya (c) Yantras.
3. Man Mandil Ghat.
4. The Chakra Yantra.
5. The Digansha Yantra.

Chapter II

THE STARS AND THEIR WAYS

"Behold yon azure dome, the sapphire sky,
Rear in unpillared might its canopy;
That vast pavilion, gemmed with worlds of light,
Whose circling glories boast a boundless flight;
And as they roll, survey man's chequered state
And scan the destinies of mortal fate."

—Pandnameh of Sa'di.



HE famous MAN MANDIL (Plate II, 3) was erected by the Rajput Raja Man Singh of Amber about the year 1600 A. D. and was used as an observatory ninety-three years later by his descendant Sawai Jaya Singh, the founder cf the picturesque town of Jaipur. Jaya Singh was an erudite prince and his favourite study was Astronomy. He spent seven long years in ransacking the Hindu as well as all available foreign astronomical and mathematical works which he procured from Samarkand and elsewhere. He had many of these works translated into Sanskrit for making a comparative study of the Hindu, the Turkish and the European systems of astronomy; and he himself invented some astronomical instruments — *Ram Yantra*, *Samrat Yantra*, and notably, the *Jaiprakash Yantra*, — after a great deal of research.

Jaya Singh

Referring to some astronomical instruments he had procured from King Emmanuel of Portugal, he noted in his great work in Persian, the *Zeej Mahammad Shāhi*, that on critical examination they were found to be defective in as much as they caused a difference of four minutes in calculations regarding eclipses. He attributed the errors in the calculations of Hipparchus, Ptolemy and others to the inaccuracy of their appliances.

Jaya Singh was commissioned by Mahammad Shah the Emperor of Delhi, to correct the errors that had crept into the calender. Hence it was that in addition to the Observatory here, he installed four others at Delhi, Muttra, Oojjein and Jaipur, and embodied the results of his observations in his *Zeej Mahammad Shāhi*, so named in honour of the aforesaid emperor.

Striking to the left into a narrow alley where no other conveyance but your legs will carry you, and taking a few turns up over some stone-paved staircased lanes, you come at last in front of the famous building, the *Mān Mandil*— a place to measure the globe, 'from *mān* (measurement) and *mandil* (globe)'.

The Man Mandil

Admitted through a narrow entrance you find yourself in a spacious quadrangle shady and cool under the overspreading branches of a pair of old peepuls. Inside an open hall, the walls and arches are all covered

with profuse floral decorations in the old Indian style and fresh enough for the vicissitudes of three goodly centuries. A sudden glimpse of the clear and pellucid water of the Ganges at the ghat below now catches your eyes through the side-doors and apprises you of your arrival at the river-bank.

Up over to the top of the roof you find the remnants of the works of the mighty ancients. Few they are now that are in existence — only those that were perhaps hard-set, immovable stones, and merely illustrative of what once there had been, — standing out still in their colossal grandeur beneath the wide expanse of the azure above. Down below on the east as you look, the placid shining lovely stream glides along its stony bank of running stairs, and on the west spreads out the city itself with myriads of house-tops basking in the sun. Amidst surroundings so grand and impressive under the vast canopy of the heaven's blue, a sense of quiet seclusion, silent and solemn and so well adapted to contemplation and serious study, seems calmly to steal into your heart. Looking backward into the gloomy past your mind's eye may yet perceive how those mighty intellects of old sat here clad in their simple robes and lay entranced in their favourite pursuits, poring over their old tomes of astrology and astronomy and scanning the heavens for the stars and planets that were to light them into the mysteries of Time and Space as measured by the cycling orbs.

A look at the instruments constructed by Jaya Singh may now be of interest if you should feel inclined to have some idea of their use. The first, then, that you find is the *Dakshina-bhitti Yantra* (Mural Quadrant) — a stone wall built in the plane of the meridian eleven feet high and a little over nine feet in length, with two quadrants intersecting each other described thereon and three concentric arcs upon each of them graduated into degrees and minutes. The shadows cast by a couple of iron spikes (fixed perpendicular to the plane of the wall at the top corners) upon the divisions of those arcs, give the sun's altitude and zenith-distance as also the meridianal altitude of the stars and the latitude of the place.

Dakshinabhitti Yantra

The next instrument is the colossal *Samrat Yantra* (the Prince of instruments) which is rather a giant Sun-dial. It is a massive stone right-angled triangle 4⅛ feet broad standing upright in the plane of the meridian, with stone stairs in the middle to ascend to the top. It is 36 feet long, and is 22⅛ feet high on its northern end and 6⅛ feet on the southern, the inclined hypotenuse thus formed pointing to the North Pole. On the eastern and western sides of this wall are arcs of massive stone somewhat greater than the quadrant of a circle, and both sides of each of the arcs are marked out

Samrat Yantra

into degrees; and stairs run up by the side of each to the top to admit of closer observations. The shadow of the wall as it creeps upon the arcs gives the solar time; the distances in time from the meridian of the moon, the planets and stars, and the declination and hour-angle of the heavenly bodies can also be calculated by the help of this instrument. A double Mural Quadrant has also been inscribed on the eastern side of the wall. It is a large structure of stone and gives some idea of the accuracy and precision in the works of ancient times. Another *Samrat Yantra* of smaller dimensions and exactly similar to this lies further to the east (Plate II, 2, *b*).

The *Narivalaya Dakshina and Uttara Gola* or the Equinoctial Circle (Plate II, 2, *c*) appears next.

Narivalaya Dakshina and Uttara Gola

It is a large circular slanting piece of stone placed in the equinoctial plane with a circle described on the northern side over $4\frac{1}{8}$ feet in diameter. Two diameters drawn upright and horizontally at right angles divide the circle into four equal parts of ninety divisions each. An iron spike in the centre pointing to the North Pole denotes by its shadow the meridianal distance of the sun or the stars when in the Northern Hemisphere. The use of this instrument is to find out time and also whether the heavenly bodies are in the Northern or the Southern Hemisphere.

Then comes the *Chakra Yantra* (Plate II, 2*a*, 4)

consisting of a movable circle of iron and brass — the circumference of which is graduated into sixty parts—turning upon an axis fixed between two walls and pointing to the North Pole. To a peg in the centre was attached a brass index two inches broad with a line in its middle passing through the centre of the circle, but this is now broken. By moving the circle and the index to bring a particular planet or star to the middle line of the index, the degrees of its declination may be found out, and thus the distance in time (hour-angle) of the sun, the moon and the stars from the meridian can be ascertained.

Chakra Yantra

We next approach another large instrument, the *Digansha Yantra* (Plate, II, 5) constructed of massive stone and consisting of two broad concentric circular walls, the outer one double the height of the inner and graduated to 360° degrees at the top. Four iron spikes are planted on the four cardinal points of the compass upon the top of the outer wall. A round pillar of the same height as the inner wall stands at the centre of the space inside it. It is a little over four feet high and three and a half feet in diameter and has an iron spike fixed at the top. The use of this instrument is to find the degrees of azimuth of the heavenly bodies by stretching two pieces of thread crosswise from the spikes upon the outer wall and fastening another to the centre of the pillar with

Digansha Yantra

its outer end moving at the top of the outer wall.

These are the only remnants of all that had once been, which have survived the ravages of time and other destructive agencies, the rest having gone to where all things earthly must — the limbo of oblivion. As they are, however, even to this day they serve to give a slight insight into the greatness and mentality of the versatile Hindus of those by-gone times, and make it a wonder as to how they could attain to such marvellous accuracy in calculations and nice precision in results, as evidenced by the popular almanacs and calendars, with the aid of such seemingly crude and simple materials at their disposal before the quadrant-and-telescope era.

Our limited leisure, however, to be devoted to our tour would hardly permit us to indulge in reflections for the present. So, with a deep sigh and perhaps a heavy heart we now come down from the roof and cast aside the thoughts of the celestials and their science, and direct our attention to objects nearer to us in these sub-lunar regions.

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Chapter III

MOSTLY SECULAR

"The sun of eternal truth arises in the East to shine upon the West. The East is the beginning of human thought."

—Sarat Kumar Ghose.



AM now standing at the fountain-head of civilisation, — the very source of the most ancient and the most mighty monarchies. The vision is distinct, for I hold the vantage-ground of the high table-land of Western Asia. The warlike pilgrims of the Oxus are moving towards the east, the west, and the south; they are the patriarch bands of India, Europe and Egypt. At the mouths of the Indus, dwell a sea-faring people, active, ingenious, and enterprising, as when, ages subsequent to the great movement, they themselves, with the warlike denizens of the Punjab, were driven from their native land, to seek the far distant climes of Greece. The commercial people dwelling along the coast that stretches from the mouth of the Indus to the Coree, are embarking on that emigration whose magnificent results to civilisation, and whose gigantic monuments of art, fill the mind with mingled emotions of admiration and awe. These people coast along the shores of Mekran, traverse the mouth of the Persian Gulf and again adhering to the sea-board of Oman,

Hadramant, and Yemen (the Eastern Arabia), they sail up the Red Sea; and again ascending the mighty stream that fertilises a land of wonders, found the kingdoms of Egypt, Nubia and Abyssinia. These are the same stock that, centuries subsequently to this colonisation, spread the blessings of civilisation over Hellas and her islands.

—Thus writes Mr. Pococke of those days gone by in the nonage of old Time in lines that elevate and thrill the mind with an indescribable feeling and make one pause to meditate for a while; for, it is now hardly ever possible to realise or form any idea of the position that old India occupied over the globe in those early ages. Hard have the master-minds and capable savants worked to clear the debris heaped up by æons reckoned in centuries, till materials and informations enough have now been unearthed to characterise her as the pioneer of all civilized life in the world.

India of old

From a comparison of her language and customs, myths and religion, and her old architectural remains with those of the other regions of the earth boasting of ancient civilisation, India has been pronounced to be the very spot where all art and learning had their origin and the ultimate source whence emanated all knowledge and civilisation in the infancy of humanity, that later on illumined Assyria and Egypt, Persia and Greece — and, for

the matter of that, the whole continent of Europe as well. In his *Philosophy of History* in the beginning of the last century the great western philosopher HEGEL took India to be "*the centre of emigration for all the Western World.*" Later researches have gone further and proved that the civilisation of Mexico, Yucatan and Peru in the Western Hemisphere also owed its origin to the Hindu emigrants from the Indian shores. [1]

Origin of Civilisation

Driven from their native abodes by mighty conflicts and religious upheavals large bodies of men sought homes in distant climes and carried along with them their old language and religion and all the civilized arts known to them, and spread them over the regions where they settled. Bactria, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece and Phœnicia were among the regions where they carried the germs of arts and sciences after this vast human tide 'swept across the valley of the Indus on the west,' and 'passed the barrier of the Punjab, rolled onward towards its destined channel in Europe and in Asia to filful its benevolent office in the moral fertilisation of the world.' Anent this tide of colonisation it may be interesting to note that even Benares had then sent its quota of men that were "distinctly seen near the banks of the Tigris, as 'COSSÆI,' that is, the people of CASI, the classical name for Benares." [2]

(1) K. N. Bose's Hindu Civilisation in Ancient America.
(2) Pococke's India in Greece, p. 46.

Time brought about inevitable changes, old shapes and forms in their religion and language were transformed or modified almost beyond recognition; but enough have yet been left in the crumbling ruins of old architecture and the old language to help to trace with reasonable certainty similaraties and analogies for identifying them with their parent source. A great French scholar, M. CREUZER remarks that "if there is a country on earth which can justly claim the honour of having been the cradle of the human race, or at least the scene of a primitive civilisation, the successive developments of which carried into all parts of the ancient world, — and even beyond, the blessings of knowledge, which is the second life of man, *that country assuredly is India.*" Hence it is that another great thinker, M. LOUIS JACOLLIOT, treats the thesis that "to study India is to trace humanity to its source" as a simple truism.

In ecstasy over India's language, PROF. BARNOUF writes: "We will study India with its philosophy and its myths, its literature and its laws, *in its language.* Nay it is more than India, *it is a page of the origin of the world* we will attempt to decipher." Speaking of her philosophy, M. COUSIN in the same strain remarks: "the history of Indian philosoply is the abridged history of the philosophy ot the world." The *Sankhya* philosophy of KAPILA and the *Nyaya* of GAUTAMA were, according to MR. R. C. DUTT,

the very first systems of mental philosophy and logic in the world; and even Grammar and Arithmetic, he holds, were invented in India. Hence it was that India attracted the sages of old, Fa Hian and Hiuen Thsang, Pythagorus and Lycurgus and Megasthenes to travel to her distant regions to study law and philosophy and religion at their fountain source.

Kasi of old

As the brightest gem upon her diadem and the centre of all culture and learning in India, Benares—which only is within the scope of this work—has held its pre-eminence throughout all ages; for, here it was that about 700 B. C. lived KAPILA, the founder of the aforesaid Sankhya school of philosophy, and according to B. N. Chunder, "here, probably, did GAUTAMA found his school of the Nyaics. YASKA probably published his Nirukta at this place, PANINI his Grammar and KULLAKA BHATTA his 'Commentaries on the Institutes'." Apart from being the chief seat of religion, therefore, Benares was thus the cradle of all learning in the East and full of abodes of scholars and students from all quarters. When the great Buddha came to Benares there were no less than seven hundred seminaries and even then it had wide celebrity for its educational institutions of the ancient type.

In the Mogul times, FEIZI, it is said, disguised himself as a Hindu boy here in order to initiate

himself in the Hindu *Shastras.* In latter days also, distinguished foreigners like Fitch (1583), Tavernier (1668), and Heber (1825) directed their steps to this place in course of their travels and search after Indian wisdom and Indian antiquity. Western savants from Sir William Jones who had 'discovered Sanskrit' to the Western scholars, down to all who had followed him, never failed to visit this shrine of all ancient wisdom to study and make researches here for a while in its hallowed grounds; and the English Cemetery at the Sekrole quarter has a melancholy interest as holding the last remains of one of the earliest of the great Western scholars, Colonel Wilfred, who had done so much to bring Sanskrit before the world — 'that language which formed all others' — and who had been taken to have 'almost Hinduised himself by residence in Benares from 1788 to 1822.'

The oldest living City

Apart from the undisputed sovereignty it had wielded over the whole of Hindu India in all matters of religion from the earliest of times, Benares has ever been regarded as the fountain-head of the Hindu philosophy, theology and jurisprudence, and the decision of the Benares authorities claimed supreme respect and unquestioning acceptance at all times throughout the country. But the inevitable changes that time works upon the face of Dame Nature has its sequel upon

humanity and national life as well. So, though it has kept up its existence as *the only oldest living city of note* in the two hemispheres at the present time, the old order has changed 'with the process of the suns' and new customs and new modes of life have yielded place to the pre-existing ones. Whether it has been a history of advance towards the optimist's millenium it is for the philosopher to ponder, not for the casual tourist to ascertain.

Educational Systems of old

What, however, is apparent even to the most superficial observer is that Benares has now lost its old indigenous institutions which alone, apart from the holy shrines, made it famous and sought for in the by-gone times. The old *chatus-pāthis* and abodes of scholars and great teachers where systematic training in all branches of Indian philosophy and ancient *shastras* was imparted, and where the students lived in all humility the simple life of *Bhramacharya* in the homes of their preceptors and forgot the world while absorbed in study, — are now merely memories of the past. A few present-day *tols* maintained by the munificence of some Rajas and *reises* may still be met with as we shall presently see, but they are the merest shadows of the olden days. A few *Shastris* or great *Pandits* — through some of whom Benares still retains its ancient reputation for its learned men — may now and then be found to have

a few disciples attending on them, but nothing like the old institutions is now in existence.

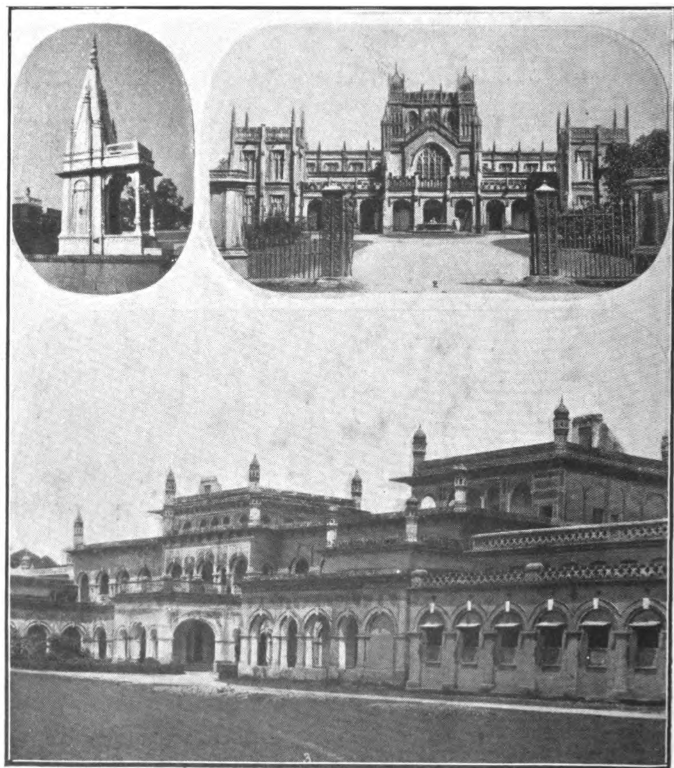
As to the utility of such institutions it may be unhesitatingly observed that the influence they exerted upon the national life was vast and wide, turning out scholars of profound erudition living the simplest of lives and knowing but the fewest of wants and in very deed exhibiting a striking combination of plain living and high, thinking in the highest sense.[1] Examples are ever catching and the effect upon the surroundings and the multitude among whom they moved broadcast throughout the country may well be imagined. How the old times had changed and what the agencies that wrought the change through the various vicissitudes of religious upheavals and alien conquests, are mere matters of history.

(1) By way of an illustration it may not be out of place to note the simple but touching anecdote of a great Bengal Pandit of old named Ramnath. He was the brightest gem of the court of Maharaja Krishna Chandra of Nadiya, and his fame as the greatest of the learned men of the time had spread all over the land. The sum-total of his worldly belongings, however, consisted of a few small huts, a large heap of old wood-bound hand-written puñthis (books) and a small pension from the court to live upon ; and his wife had but two pieces of thread tied round her wrists as substitutes for gold and silver to signify her blessed married state. A princess' maid having once jeered at these her precious possessions, she was said to have rejoined with conscious pride that

Though it is not possible to bring these times back again, a few large-hearted persons here, actuated by the desire as well as the hope of creating something like the wholesome atmosphere of the olden days, have undertaken the task of imparting education to the rising generations on lines different from those in vogue in our provincial universities, making secular education go hand in hand with moral and religious training based upon the ancestral religion and ethics of the Hindus. The experiment started hardly over a decade ago through the indefatigable energy and self-sacrifice of that noble lady Mrs. Annie Besant and her noble band of workers, has already been giving fair promises of success. The objects of the institution founded by her, the CENTRAL HINDU COLLEGE, have been to 'wed together the religion, the ethics, the philosophy of the hoary East with the science and literature of the young and vigourous West,'

the disappearance of those little bits of thread from her wrists would mean the darkening of all Nadiya which all the lustre of the princess' gold would be impotent to dispel. The Maharaja having once come on a visit found him employed in his studies in perfect contentment and peace in spite of all the marks of dire poverty all about his surroundings. On being asked if he had any want and what the Raja could do for him, the Pandit looked abstracted for a moment and replied in amazement: "Want? — Well, I don't see I have any.—What can you do for me?" Such was this Indian Diogenes!

PLATE III



1. Saraswati Temple (Central Hindu College).
2. Queen's College.
3. Central Hindu College Boarding.

and 'to build up a Hindu aristocracy, courteous, brave, truthful in word and deed, public-spirited citizens, patriotic to the Motherland, loyal to the Imperial Crown,—to send forth from this place men worthy of their glorious past, men worthy to build a yet greater future, men worthy to be citizens in an empire of the free.'

Central Hindu College

Too much chatting perhaps for hurrying tourists,—but may not this be introductory to what follows? So, without further delay, we trace our steps back from the neighbourhood of the Man Mandil to the main road, and go westward past Godowlia to see this institution first.

Through a populous part of the city along broad roads with stately structures upon their borders we pass, till we arrive at the precincts of the CENTRAL HINDU COLLEGE decorated with small minarets in the Indian style of architecture in the quiet Kamachcha quarter of the city. Opened in 1898, it has been affiliated to the Allahabad University up to the M. A. standard;[1] the most marked feature of this institution, however, is that the boys in all the college and school classes have to read Sanskrit as their principal subject. Attached to this is also a

(1) This institution is shortly to form the nucleus of the proposed **Hindu University of Benares** towards the establishment of which Mrs. Besant and the Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya of Allahabad have been directing their united efforts and working unceasingly. According to the Draft Memorandum of

seminary for the exclusive study of that language, named the *Ranavir Patshala*, and there is also a Girls' School as well connected with it, designated the *Kalika Vidyalaya*. Thus, nearly a thousand students in all receive their education and training in this institution.

It has so far been independent of Government aid but its usefulness and the good work done by it have met with open recognition from the highest in the land, and Lord Minto almost on the eve of his departure from India thought fit to visit this institution and expressed high gratification at what he saw here. The grounds upon which the buildings stand are the gift of the Maharaja of Benares; and many of the Ruling Indian Princes, rich merchants and other personages in various grades of life have contributed towards the erection of the beautiful structures here; and white marble slabs above the doorways commemorate their names. The costs in respect to the College Laboratory here were

Association, besides the usual provisions for the diffusion of scientific, technical and professional knowledge, the main objects of this University are to be 'to promote the study of the Hindu Shastras and of Sanskrit literature generally, as a means of preserving and popularising for the benefit of the Hindus in particular and of the world at large in general, the best thought and culture of the Hindus, and all that was good and great in the ancient civilization of India,' and 'to promote the building up of character in youth by making religion and ethics an integral part of education.

borne by two Bombay merchants, and the funds left by an Indian student accidentally killed in England furnished means for the erection of the School Hall. In fact, every part of all the buildings, bears testimony to the munificence of generous donors, which reached the figure of over Rs. 1,189,000 in course of the first nine years of its existence.

It is the day of the great All-India Theosophical Conference [1] which is to meet in the hall of the Hindu College and commence its sittings from to-day. Volunteer boys with their pretty floral badges move about briskly and are busy receiving delegates coming in from all quarters of India, A very young amiable boy from the Punjab accosts us and undertakes to pilot us round the college and the Boarding Houses.

Stepping into the courtyard you find a small white marble temple in the middle (Plate III, 1) with a very gracefully-draped image of the Goddess of Learning, *Saraswati*, in white marble, worshipped with floral offerings. In the open verandah upon the raised floor of the hall the first object that falls to your sight is a large portrait of Mrs. Besant in delicate colours faithful to life. There is another of the present Maharaja of Benares, the donor of the grounds of the College and one of its pirncipal benefactors. By a great good fortune we meet here the noble lady Mrs. Besant herself who receives us with a kindly smile and

( )Sunday, the 26th December 1909.

with greetings in the graceful Hindu style with joined palms. After a few words with her we walk round the College and see the Common Room containing a good supply of books and newspapers and a large portrait in oil of the Principal and pass on to the fine quadrangle of the adjoining Boarding Houses (Plate III, 3) carpeted with beautiful season-flowers of the various hues of the rainbow. All the houses look neat and comfortable and accommodate within them about two hundred and fifty students. One of the interesting features here is that a spacious apartment on the first floor has been consecrated and set apart as a Prayer Room "for the worship of *Iswara*"—the most cosmopolitan name that can be thought of — in the right orthodox Hindu style.

Theosophical Society

We now take leave of our young guide and cross over to the quarters of the THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, Indian Section—on the other side of the road. Amid extensive gardens in the wide compound, a tank on one end with spotted deer grazing on the banks and the pretty houses standing isolated here and there overhung with flowering creepers look exceedingly picturesque. One such accommodates Mrs. Besant and is designated '*Santi Kunja*'—the bower of peace; and there are quarters here for the Hindu College Professors as well going by the name of '*Jnana-Geha*'—the house of knowledge.

You must now see the hall where the members

of the Society meet. Just above the entrance is engraved on the outer wall the sacred 'OM' and the mystic symbol like the six-rayed star with an inscription above in Sanscrit — '*Satyāt nāsti parò Dharma*' — There is no religion higher than Truth.

Inside you see the walls covered with interesting paintings — pictures of Christ and Confucius, Zarathustra and Lao-Tze, Birbal and Akbar, Madonna under the Apple tree and St. Joseph with the child Jesus, and other subjects of cosmopolitan interest. A portrait of Col. Olcott the founder of the Society and fine large ones of Mrs. Besant and Madam Blavatsky decorate the northern and the southern walls. One other striking object in the hall is a large mirror upon which is etched the figure of a man clad in the fashion of an American Indian standing upon a globe with a sword in hand and starry rays around his head somewhat like a halo—said to be the Persian (Zoroastrian) representation of the Sun. The hall is well stocked with books and magazines and the shelves are replete with all kinds of Theosophical literature and Hindu scriptures. A sense of calm repose pervading here has a chastening effect upon the mind.

We may now resume our rambles, and as we are in this quarter we may go a little further southward and have a look at the noted well

Goebi Kua

GOEBI KUA lying under the shade of some large peepuls near some brick-fields

in a very retired nook at this end of the city. Beneath a wooden canopy standing over it sits an old Brahmin who draws water and supplies it to people coming from the most distant quarters for it. It is scrupulously clean and is reputed to have medicinal properties, and its continual use for a time is said to effect cure ot dyspepsia and debility and a host of other maladies.

Ram Krishna Shebasram

Back from this place, as we pass by the RAM KRISHNA SHEBASRAM (Home of Service), not very far from the Central Hindu College, we may drop in for a short visit. It is a local branch of the Ram Krishna Mission and is intended to give relief to the poor and the diseased and was founded in A. D. 1900. The Hospital is well worth seeing and has been doing very noble work and would amply deserve active help from the munificent and the rich.

The institution has quite an interesting history of its own in respect to the way it was ushered into existence. Some youths of noble blood in Benares fired by the instructions and inspiration of Swami Vivekanand—a name now of world-wide celebrity—resolved to devote their life in serving humanity in the spirit of worshipping God. "It is this 'worship of the poor', this consecration of one's self to 'serve the Lord coming daily before us in the shape of the diseased, the lunatic, the leper, and the sinner' that the great Swami Vivekanand has taught the Indian

people to realise and practise in their every day life." Opportunities were soon afforded them in the shape of a few dying indigent men and women cast adrift on the streets in their last extremity by the owners of the hired houses where they had been staying—a thing alas! not of very rare occurrence in this great city. These youths picked them up and placed them under shelter, and gave them food and medicines by means of funds they had raised by begging. This was the germ of the institution which gradually expanded and drew public attention, and was then placed in the hands of the noble workers of the Ram Krishna Mission after it had attained some magnitude. The foundation-stone of the present fine buildings—all constructed by the aid of kindly donations—was laid in April 1908, and in the year between July 1908 and June 1909, 6413 persons were given relief in various ways; and it is interesting to observe that two among them were *Christians* and 2443 *Mahomedans*, the rest being Hindus belonging to all the provinces of India. The institution thus affords relief irrespective of caste, creed or nationality, to 'the diseased, homeless, and neglected poor' and the destitute, unable to earn a living or lying starving in the street. There are neat indoor and outdoor hospital and dispensary in the Home where medicines of all the three systems — Kaviraji, Allopathy and Homœpathy — are stocked. Even those who are unable to attend are treated in their own places'

and respectable families reduced to destitution obtain help in the shape of food and money supplied them at their own homes at stated intervals. Such are the noble objects of this noble institution in this great city!

Victoria Park

Along the broad roads with spacious gardens on either side as we go northwards the VICTORIA PARK comes into view with its marble bust of the good Queen set upon a high pedestal wearing a very dignified expression upon the face. The fine green lawn in its ample compound has a pleasant and inviting look and furnishes an enjoyable promenade and recreation ground.

Queen's College

The turrets of the QUEEN'S COLLEGE now appear amidst the picturesque surroundings of its well-kept grounds lined with flower-beds of elegant designs. The High School is located in a separate building with a very beautiful ornate column in its front. The quarters of the Principal and the Head Master are within the College compound—pretty little houses in the quiet of arborial surroundings.

The College building (Plate III, 2) is a noble edifice in the architecture of the old Gothic style with a central tower seventy-five feet high. Mottoes and wise sayings in Old English and Devnagari characters form a pretty as well as useful decoration below the cornices all around. The existence of the

institution dates as far back as 1791 when JONATHAN DUNCAN, the then Resident of Benares, suggested to Lord Cornwallis the establishment of a College "*for the preservation and cultivation of Sanskrit literature and religion of the Hindu nation at the centre of their faith and common resort of their tribes.*" Thus was founded the Sanskrit College with Pandit Kashi Nath as its first Principal. The English School raised to the status of a College in 1843 was amalgamated with the Sanskrit College ten years later, and the united colleges developed into the present Queen's College now affiliated to the Allahabad University. The present building took four years (1848-1852) in its designing and erection by Major Kittoe costing Rs. 1,27,000, and is undoubtedly a thing of beauty. The College owns a well-equipped Laboratory and a Boarding House at a slight distance across the road, and a commodious building is now being erected in the College compound to serve as a Library for storing Sanskrit works and to be named *Saraswati-bhaban.*

As the principal place for the culture of Sanskrit learning it earned the reputation of being the Oxford of India, and included among the number of its professors such eminent Western Sanskrit scholars as Mr. R. T. H. Griffith, the translator of the Ramayana, Dr. Kern, Professor of Sanskrit in the Leyden University, Dr. Fitzgerald Hall, late Librarian of the India Office, and Dr. John Muir,

Dr. Ballantyne and Mr. Gough. The present head of the institution, Mr. A. Venis, the profound Sanskrit scholar, has nobly kept up the old traditions by his erudition and valuable researches. A monthly paper named "*The Pandit*" was started from the college in 1866 and some rare and valuable Sanskrit works were published therein.

As you enter the main hall the first object that strikes you is the resplendent youthful figure of the late Queen Victoria of blessed memory clad in ermine and seated in regal glory, crowned and with a chain of brilliants round her neck and the sceptre and the orb in her hands. It is in the brightly coloured stained glass in the window above the entrance and is a fine work of art.

As you turn round, the long hall with its high roof looks exceedingly imposing and strings of mottoes decorate the space below the cornices here also. Towards the centre of the hall and furthur off as well, the senior college classes occupy the room. To the further end on the other side of the lofty arch is the space set apart for students of Sanskrit who sit on the carpeted floor in the orthodox fashion at the feet of their preceptors — the learned Pandits and Shastris—in the early hours of the morning. Above the wall at one end of the hall is a circle of the the Zodiac (the *Rãshi-chakra*) on glass panes with all the symbolic figures and signs in bright and beautiful paints. Two wings running from the

nave towards the right and left accommodate the undergraduates' classes, the office as well as the Library containing the finest collection of rare Oriental manuscripts. Recesses upon the high side walls have been utilized for the storage of books and some fossilized bones and other curiosities, and galleries run along them.

Coming down to the open grounds below, another object of interest catches your eyes. It is a tall round stone pillar thirty-one and a half feet high—a monolith found at Pahladpur near Gazipur and brought to Benares in 1853. It is similar to the Asoka pillar standing in the Allahabad Fort, which, however, is much taller than this. Two lines of inscriptions in the character of the times of the Gupta Kings of the fourth century are still readable though partly obliterated, and a few semi-circular diagrams are also visible on one side. Leaving this antiquarian treasure, as you prepare to come out to the road, a small circular tank attracts your eye with the head and nozzle of a live crocodile of decent proportions floating thereon and diving underneath when your attentions seem to grow too obtrusive.

Education

Such is the premier educational institution of Benares. All grades of Schools ranging between the High and the Primary are here, numbering over two hundred and including some twenty-six Girls' Schools among

them. They afford facilities to something like eleven thousand boys and girls to pick up their three R's therein. An important one among them is that founded by Raja Jay Narain Ghosal in 1817 at Bhelupura and now being managed by the Church Missionary Society and going by the name of the *Jay Narain Collegiate School.* Another is the *Hewett Kshatriya School* founded and endowed by the Raja of Bhinga with lavish donations. The five different Christian Missions in the city manage among them eight boys' and eighteen girls' schools imparting Christian instructions to nearly two thousand pupils.

Chatuspathis and Pathsalas

For the exclusive study of Sanskrit on the old methods, there are some thirty or more *Chatuspāthis* and *Pāthsālas* teaching nearly a thousand students. The most important among them are the *Sanskrit Pāthsala* at Chauka Ghat attached to the Government Sanskrit College, the *Jugal Kishore Ruiā* and the *Sangvet* Pathsalas at Nagwa, the *Brahma Vidyá* Pathsala at Tehri Nim, the *Yasovijaya Jaina* Pathsala at Thatteri Bazar, the *Syādvada* at Bhadaini, the *Durbhanga* Pathsala at Dasaswamedh, the *Sannyasi* Sanskrit Pathsala near the Visweswara Temple and the *Iswara* and *Sarbamangalā* chatuspathis at Bengalitolah. Besides the Government College Pathsala, the Nagwa Pathsalas and the Durbhanga, the Jaina and the Syádváda Pathsalas contain the largest number of pupils. The institution

founded by the Maharaja of Durbhanga imparts education in the Hindu Philosophy, Nyaya and Grammar, and the celebrated Pandit Mahamahopadhaya Siv Kumar Misra is at the head of it at present. The Maharaja of Kashmir had a similar institution near the Dasaswamedh, but it has been amalgamated with the Ranavir Pathsala of the Central Hindu College. Besides these there are numerous small *tols*, in each of which four or five students read under a *Pandit* or *Adhyãpaka*, and students from various parts of India still come to this place and sit at their feet and study the various branches of the Shastras such as *Vedanta*, *Sankhya*, *Mimañsha*, *Yoga*, *Smriti*, *Yotish*, and also Grammar, Rhetoric and Poetry. There are still over eighty of such distinguished *Adhyãpakas*, some of the most eminent among them being *Mahamahopadhyayas* Gangadhar Shastri Telang, C.I.E., Siv Kumar Misra, Rakhaldas Nyayaratna, Subrahmanya Shastri Dravida, Tatya Shastri, Krishnanath Nyayapanchanan, Bhagavatacharya, and *Pandits* Mahadeo Shastri, Annoda Charan Tarkachuramani, Priyanath Tattwaratna, Srikar Shastri, Bhawani Dikshit, Jaya Krishna Vidyasagara, and Vinayak Shastri Yotishi.

Along the road leading to the Kasi station we pass by the Zenana Mission House and the Bible and Tract Depôt on the left, and further on the ISWARI PRASAD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL (the Lady Dufferin Hospital for Females) founded in 1892 and occupying

Hospitals

extensive grounds. Next to it are the fine buildings of the PRINCE OF WALES' HOSPITAL erected by the gentry of Benares in honor of the late King Edward's visit to the city in 1876 as the Prince of Wales. Another important hospital in the city is the VICTORIA HOSPITAL built in 1888 by the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission at Sigra and managed by them. There are a few other hospitals also doing very good work though on a small scale.

Dharmasalas and Chhatras

Very numerous are the charitable institutions founded by Rajas and rich men consisting of *Dharmasalas* and *Chhattras* in which substantial provision has been made for the shelter of pilgrims and strangers, the maintenance of poor Brahmins and indigent persons belonging to other classes, and for helpless widows and students studying Sanskrit. These institutions are mostly in the nature of alms-houses and it has been estimated that nearly four thousand persons obtain food and shelter therein. There are some endowments as well providing for scholarships to students. The *Chhatras* of the Maharajas of Durbhanga and Kashmir near the Dasaswamedh and Tehri Nim, and of Ahalya Bai near the ghat of her name, and of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, are on an extensive scale. So are the Nathcote and the Marwari *Chhattras* feeding large number of Marwaris. Mention may also be made of the *Chhattras* connected with the names of Rani Bhawani, Rashmani,

Vidyamayi, Rajrajeswari, as also of Putea, Tahirpur and Amberia. A Marwari *reis* supplies rice and flour and other eatables to a number of students in his garden at Sigra.

Hindu Endowments

The Indian Princes and *Reises* vied with one another formerly in affording relief to the poor as an act of the highest merit; and thus was the origin of the *Chhatras* existing in scores in all parts of the city. Besides these, the *Muths* or monasteries of different sects of asceties and the various Hindu temples are maintained by substantial endowments made by their votaries or patrons, and provide means of living for a very large number of religious devotees. One of these, the Gopal Mandir, owns ten villages and two mehals and commands an annual income of over three thousand rupees. So, between objects religious and secular and considerations of piety and hankerings after fame and glory, immense is the benefit to the poor and the needy — and for the matter of that, to a number loafers and nothing-to-do's as well, unavoidably mixed up in the medley; and the pious donors undoubtedly share the blessings and benedictions articulated in the fulness of heart by grateful lips. This the recompense here of charity, and what hereafter — it is perhaps for the conscious heart alone to feel!



Chapter IV

SECTS AND CULTS

" The religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men. But the quality of the imagination is to flow, and not to freeze."

—Emerson.

"............Message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago : 'They who see but one in all the changing manifoldness of this universe, unto them belongs Eternal Truth, unto none else, unto none else'."

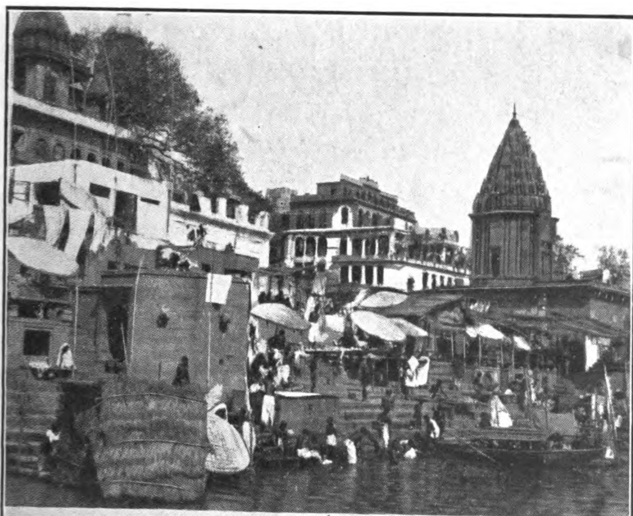
—Dr. J. C. Bose.



ERY close to the Prince of Wales' Hospital is KABIR CHAURA named after one whose holy life and sweet and entrancing songs go to influence the lives of a considerable section of the Hindi-speaking people. It is KABIR the great Saint aud founder of the *Kabirpanthi* sect of ascetics and the first of the born *Sants* according to the Radhaswamis. Following an old work 'Kabir Kasauti,' the compiler of '*Kabir-Shaheb-ki Sabdawali*' [1] computes that he was born about Sambat 1455 (1399 A. D.) and as he was reputed to have reached the great age of 120, he

Kabir

(1) Edition — Belvedere Printing Works, Allahabad.





1. Dasaswamedh Ghat.
2. Sankaracharya.
3. A group of Sannyasis.

probably passed away about 1519 A. D. Of him it is said that while Niru or Nur Oli Julaha, a Mahomedan weaver of Benares, had been engaged in washing thread in the *Lahar-ka-talao* he happened to perceive a child floating on the water, and taking him out he and his wife Nima nursed and brought him up under their humble roof. A large shallow tank outside Benares and a small temple lying close to the 423rd Milestone near the Grand Trunk Road running towards Allahabad now mark the spot where Kabir was found.

From childhood he was of a very devout turn of mind and manifested great powers. As he apparently belonged to a low caste, the great Vaishnava teacher Swami Ramananda then living in his retreat over the Panchaganga ghat in Benares would not make him a disciple which he ardently longed to be. He, thereupon, hit upon the expedient of lying prone in front of Ramananda's house towards the close of one night. The latter coming out in the dim hours of day-break for his morning ablutions in the Ganges happened to touch his body with his feet, and considering it to be a corpse ejaculated "Rama" "Rama". This Kabir took as his *Mantra* or mystic text and claimed to be his disciple; and moved by his piety Ramananda also recognised him as such later on.

Numbers of followers soon flocked to him attracted by his piety and devotion as he grew in years;

both Hindus and Mahomedans attended his discourses, for he preached and maintained that under whatever name God was invoked it was THE ONE AND THE SAME GOD that was worshipped. The Benares Brahmans grew extremely jealous at his popularity, and with the object of putting him out of countenance they once devised a plan of inviting a very large number of people to his house to dinner without his knowledge. Legend relates a miracle that came to pass. Thousands of people gathered at his door in the morning. Nothing daunted, he filled a *handi* (pot) with eatables, covered it over with a piece of cloth, and gave it to a disciple. The latter thrust his hand repeatedly into the pot and brought out food enough for all to eat to satiety; and at last when the cover was laid aside, the pot was still full to the brim.

A man of great devotion, his grand and inimitable musical *dohas* (songs), many hundreds in number, are still familiarly and constantly recited in the North-West and in the Punjab and afford pleasure and comfort to many a devout soul. His works in Hindi embodying his teachings are twenty in number and are known collectively as the *Khas Grantha.* As worshipper of the One Supreme Deity he was claimed by the Hindus and the Mahomedans alike. At Maghar, a village not far from Benares, he called his followers together one morning and informed them that he would leave them that

day. He laid himself down and his disciples covered him over with a white sheet of cloth, and thus as he was he passed away. The Hindus wanted to cremate the dead body and the Mahomedans wished to give it a burial. Both the parties quarrelled over it, and at last when the covering was lifted, lo! there was nothing underneath but a few snow-white flowers upon the empty bed. These they shared, and Bir Singha, Raja of Kasi, took half and burnt them and preserved the ashes at Kabir Chaura — one of the twelve *muths* now in existence out of a number of those founded by him. The Pathan King Bijli Khan took the rest of the flowers and gave them a burial at Maghar, near Gorakhpur and erected a tomb over the spot where he died. Both the places are objects of pilgrimage to the followers of Kabir.

Another saintly personage, ROIDAS SHAHEB, also lived in Benares at this time and was also a *sant* and associate of Kabir.

Kabir Chaura Muth

In a lane by the side of the Iswari Prasad Hospital lies a line of low-roofed buildings enclosing a quadrangle shaded by *neems*, cool, noiseless and quiet in its seclusion. Here was the abode of Kabir, and under a dome is a clean white sheet spread out upon the floor and strewn with flowers. In an apartm close by are kept an

ornamental *tāj* (head-dress) and pictures of Ramanand and Kabir, — the latter discoursing to his followers with his fingers holding a shuttle. In the garden adjoining are the plain white tombs of Nima and Nur, the adoptive parents of Kabir, under the shade of over-spreading *neems*.

A few steps off lies MADHU DASS'S GARDEN associated with the memory of the retreat of Warren Hastings to Chunar and of a tragedy enacted by Wazir Ali, the ex-Nawab of Oudh, mention of which may be made here In 1781, when Warren Hastings had repaired to Benares to bring Raja Chet Singh to book for failing to supply troops as demanded by him, he used to stay at Madhu Dass's Garden. After the massacre of the English troops and three officers by Chet Singh's followers [1] he had to leave this place and retire to the fort of Chunar with his men. His position had become so very precarious that he himself writes: "If Chet Singh's people after they had effected his rescue, had proceeded to my quarters at Mahadew Dass's garden, instead of crowding after him in a tumultuous manner, as they did in his passage over the river, it is most probably that my blood, and that of about of thirty English gentlemen of my party, would have been added to the recent carnage; for they were above two thousand in number, furious and daring from the eas

Madhu Dass's Garden

(1) See Chapter X, post.

success of their last attempt; nor could I assemble more than fifty regular and armed Sepoys for my whole defence."

Later on it was the scene of another incident—the murder of the English Resident Mr. Cherry, whose memory is kept alive by a lofty monument in the cemetary at Sekrole, and of his Private Secretary and two other Europeans. The ex-Nawab Wazir Ali, who was removed from his position as Nawab of Oudh in 1799, to make room for the legitimate heir Saadat Ali Khan, had been allowed to reside in this garden. The Resident having come to learn that he was intriguing with disaffected Mahomedans and attempting to bring about a rebellion had an order passed for his removal to Calcutta. On a pretext of paying a friendly visit to the Resident, Wazir Ali came with a large number of armed followers, and while conversing with him treacherously stabbed him and killed the other three unarmed Europeans in cold blood, and retired on hearing of the approach of the English troops.

This was on the 14th January 1799, and as a sequel may be added the story of the signal bravery of Mr. Davis, a Judge and Magistrate of Benares who defended himself and his wife and children in the building now known as the *Nadeswar House* at the Sekrole quarter of the town.

After the murder of Mr. Cherry, the infuriated followers of Wazir Ali numbering some two hundred men advanced under his leadership and beseiged this place. Mr. Davis had but time to lay hold of a long iron pike with a sharp triangular steel blade for his defence; and posting himself at the head of the narrow stairs leading to the roof where his family had taken refuge, he lunged at the insurgents who attempted to go up the narrow stairs and caused them to turn back. After an hour of breathless suspense and apprehensions of imminent calamity the joyous tread of the British cavalry was heard and the party saved. Wazir Ali retired to his quarters at Madhu Dass's Garden and stayed therein till his removal to Calcutta. The NADESWAR HOUSE situated in the midst of nicely-laid flower-beds in a spacious garden is now being used by the Maharaja of Benares, to whom it belongs, as a guest-house for distiuguished visitors — among whom were the Prince and Princess of Wales (now come to the throne) in in 1906 and the Crown Prince of Germany lately in January 1911. It is sumptuously furnished and looks extremely comfortable; and besides numerous excellent oil-paintings, a large crystal peacock and a cockatoo standing upon the staircase and displaying natural colours and holding electric bulbs underneath their wings are very noticeable.

Nadeswar House at Sekrole

The locality of Madhudass's garden has, however, changed its aspect altogether at present, and it is now the head-quarter of the *Radhaswami* sect founded by Shiva Dyal Singh, a Khattri of Agra, who died in 1873. It is surrounded by high walls and possesses a splendid hall on the northern side capable of holding about two thousand people. There is a raised marble *dais* at one end where the ashes of their late Guru Brahma Sankar Misra have been deposited, and the niche on the northern wall has a very gorgeous look; and the spacious grounds have been very neatly laid out in green and floral patches. This sect follows the tenets of Kabir, Roidas, Mira Bai and others and observes certain Yoga practices leading to the contemplation of *Sabdh* (word) or *Dhwani* (sound). Though of recent growth there are numbers of people of light and education who have joined this sect into which all classes are eligible for admission.

Radhaswamis

Benares has ever been the meeting-place of all religions, and here more largely than anywhere else are people of all shades of opinions and beliefs to be always met with in numbers. Not to speak of the orthodox Hindus strictly so called who have their own shrines and temples, and the Mahomedans who have their mosques in numbers, there are various other sects claiming to share the designation of *Hindu* that have also their places of worship here. Besides the followers of Kabir and the Radhaswamis, here are

Vaishnavites and Nagas, Nanakshahis and Jains, Gorakpanthis and Shibnarayanis, and Theosophists and Arya Samajists as well. And in a field of such religious activity there could not but be a number of proselytising Christian Missions as well.

A rapid survey of these may not be without interest. As we proceed towards the Chauk, after leaving the Town Hall behind, on our left appears the large unfinished hall of the Benares branch of the *Arya Samaj* founded by the famous Dayanand Saraswati of Lahore, whose ideal was the Vedic Hinduism of the earliest ages, without the worship of idols. This is somewhat akin to the *Brahmo Samaj* which also prefesses to cull the noble teachings of all religions and limits itself to the worship of the One Godhead. The representatives of this latter Samaj had been noticed by the Rev. Mr. Sherring so far back as 1868 in Benares in the palmy days of Keshab Chandra Sen. Some members of the community are still to be found here.

Arya Samaj

Brahmo Samaj

Going into the As-Bhairo Muhalla to the northeast of the Chauk, is observed the *Bari Sangat Akhera* of the *Sikhs* built by the Maharaja of Patiala in honour of the third Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadoor. Though all the Sikhs are the followers of Nanak and go by

The Sikhs

the general name *Nānak-Panthis*, there are two classes among them, the *Udāsis* or the Mendicants and the *Nirmalis* or the Pure. They pay almost divine honors to the *Adi-granth* or the book containing the teachings of Nanak consisting of a collection of rhapsodies compiled by one of his successors, Guru Arjun Dev, about fifty years after Nanak's death. The tenth Guru of the Sikhs, the great Guru Govind Singh (1675-1708) who converted them into a fighting race, composed a Second Granth known as the *Granth of the Tenth Reign.* They have *ākheras* or *muths* near the Visweswara Road, Mir Ghat and Asi Ghat. A large one among them is the *Panchaiti Kalan* belonging to the *Udāsis* founded about 1790 and owning an income of ten thousand rupees bequeathed by its founder Baba Nanak Ram. Near the Durga Kund is the *Kinaram Akhera* founded by a Rajput of the Aughar sect about three hundred years ago, and near to it is another of a very recent date called the *Melaram Akhera.*

While here, we should not miss a sight of the fine richly furnished palaces of the Maharajas of Vizianagram and Benares in the adjacent Kamachha and Bhelupura quarters in the middle of well-kept grounds and flower-gardens with large roses and bushy foliages quaintly trimmed to imitate peacocks, tigers, camels and other animated beings.

At a little distance from the Durga Kund and

near the Water-works are the Jain temples marking the birth-place of the Tirthankara Paresnath — a prince of the blood royal of Benares — which makes the Bhelupura quarter so sacred to the Jains, like the Paresnath Hill on the borders of Hazaribagh where he passed his last days and died. Some other Jain temples stand above the Jain Mandir Ghat near Panchaganga whose plain white tapering spires uplifted amidst the surrounding elaborate Hindu architecture have a very striking appearance. There are some other temples over the Tulsi Ghat and one near the Alfred Hall as well.

The Jains

The *Jain temples* at *Bhelupura* would amply repay a visit. They stand in two clusters and belong to the *Digambara* (the sky-clad i.e. naked) and the *Swetambara* (the white-robed) sects; both the sects, however, enshrine the images of all the twenty-four Tirthankaras. Entering the temple on the right, the striking figure there is the large image in white marble of Paresnath with a hooded snake above the head stretched like an umbrella. By the right and left are smaller statues of the other Tirthankaras, six of the Swetambara and four of the Digambara sect in brass and in black and white marble. The walls are replete with photos of many famous Jain monks and the decorations are gorgeous and imposing. In an adjoining house is a piece of stone with irregular protuberances daubed

with red paint — designated *Kãl Bhairo* — evidently a latter-day loan from the later Hinduism and now an object of worship.

By the left of this is another temple of the Digambara sect with numbers of small marble figures of the Tirthankaras, all seated cross-legged and posed like Buddha statues in the attitude of meditation. Near to it is a beautiful temple with eight very finely worked ornamental screens of pierced white marble in pairs upon each of the four walls. Inside the delicate tracery is Paresnath's *Charan-pãduka* placed over a highly carved marble pedestal. In the compound to the left is another temple of the Digambaras with a magnificent floor and a large collection of images of the Tirthankaras.

The Dandis

Between the Kurukshetra Talao and the Jagannath Temple and at a short distance from the latter lies the *Dakshinamurti Muth* of the *Dandi* Sannyasis founded by Tokra Swami containing a four-armed image of Sankara in black marble. In the spacious quadrangle are a few small temples of Siva, and there is another beautiful image of Sankara in white marble seated upon a lotus represented in the act of teaching four disciples squatting upon the floor below.

The *Vaishnavite Akheras*, crowded thick near the Jagannath Temple and the Asi Ghat, would

next call your attention. Among those near the Jagannath Temple, the *Bara Gudarji* and the *Chhota Gudarji* akheras date from the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, and the *Digambari* and the *Baid* are recent institutions. Near the Asi-Sangam is the *Panditji* akhera founded by Tika Das in 1845, and in the interior of the Asi Muhulla lies the oldest of the Vaishnavite akheras, the *Vishnupanthi Akhera* established by the great Ramanuja. Another known as the *Krishna Achari Akhera* was founded by a Marhatta Brahman of that name, and the *Dadupanthi Akhera* reckons three centuries since its establishment.

The Vaishnavites

Above the Shivala Ghat as you proceed northwards, stands the *Niranjani Muth* of the *Naga* Sannyasis. Its large and shady compound is interspersed with small temples of Siva, one among them being called the Pataleswara Siva. The central temple with a trellised marble floor contains an image in gilt copper of *Kartikeya*, the general of the Gods and son of Siva and Parvati.

The Nagas

Adjoining it just on the north is the *Nirvāni Akhera*, also of the Nagas. The grounds are very spacious and capable of sheltering a large number of ascetics beneath the spreading branches of numerous trees. Here also is a large number of small temples, and underneath the roof of one of white

marble is the *Charanpaduka* of KAPIL, the founder o the Sankhya Philsophy, who lived at Benares i the seventh century B. C. This *muth* was founde by a Dewan of Raja Chet Singh named Lakhi Bab whose last remains lie beneath a high block stone just above the river under the shade of slanting mango tree with a Siva emblem set upo its flat square surface.

Going further north, above the Hanuman Gh is one other *Muth* of the Nagas, the *Juna Akhe* containing among others the standing figure *Dattātreya* in a temple and his *Charanpaduka* c white marble in another. This also shelters a large number of ascetics. The position of all the three *muths* bordering the flowing stream is picturesque in the extreme, and the view of the great arc of the bank from them (Plate XIII, 2) with its long sweep of spires and temples ending near the Dufferin Bridge on the north grand and majestic.

Other Sects

Among the other sects deserving mention are the *Gorakpanthis* who have *muths* near the Alfred Hall and the temple of Bhaironath, and the *Shivanarayanis* who are the disciples of the *Granth*, — both named after their founders; but the number of their followers is not very considerable.

The *Theosophical Society* and the good it has done to Hinduism in placing it in its true light

before the world are too widely known to need anything more than a mere mention of its name here. The *Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal*, which has its head-quarters at Gurudham in this city, was originally started in Northern India and after a few years became amalgamated with the *Nigamāgama Mandali Mahashabha* founded by Sannyasis and existing from some time before. The unified associations now went by the name of *Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal* and held their first All-India Hindu Conference from the 28th to the 30th March 1902 at Mathura. The aim of the Mahamandal is to gather together all the Hindu associations in different parts of India as its branches, so that all may work in unison towards the regeneration of the Hindu nation and the attainment of primitive purity in their religion by following the tenets of the ancient Shastras. Its objects, according to the Memorandum of Association are "to promote Hindu religious education in accordance with the Sanatana Dharma, to diffuse the knowledge of the Vedas, Smritis, Puranas and other Hindu Shastras and to introduce in the light of such knowledge useful reforms into Hindu life and society and to promote and enrich the Sanskrit and the Hindu literature in all the branches." The Mahamandal, like the Theosophical Society, is thus not a sect or sectarian at all, and is patronised by the

Sri Bharat Dharma Mahamandal

Maharajas of Kashmir, Mysore, Baroda, Jaipur, Udaipur, Alwar and almost all other Hindu Ruling Princes of India, and the Maharaja of Durbhanga is now the President of the Mahamandal.

Christian Missions

'The Christian missions doing good work in the matter of education as already mentioned may next claim our attention. The first evangelical mission to this place was set on foot in 1816, and the Rev. W. Smith was the first missionary sent to Benares by the *Baptist Mission Society* that year. This Society, however, withdrew to Delhi later on in 1890. There are four other missions now at work here.

The *Church Missionary Society* followed the Baptist Mission to this place one year later. They have been working steadily; and besides managing the *Jay Narain Collegiate School*, they have also a *Girls' Orphanage* and a *Girls' Boarding School* in hand. Into a well in the place occupied by their headquarters at Sigra, the *Thugs* of early days, it is said, used to throw the bodies of their victims after strangling them.

The next to come were the *London Mission Society* who arrived here in 1820. The Rev. M. A. Sherring who wrote "The Sacred City of the Hindus stayed here for many years and belonged to this society. They also maintain a High School under their

management and have a Church and Mission Houses near the Cantonment Railway Station.

The *Zenana Bible and Medical Mission* came later in 1867 and started a dispensary for women in 1887, and now manages the large *Victoria Hospital* at Sigra that was started the year following.

The *Weslyan Missionary Society* were the last comers of them all and settled here in 1879. They have a Church at Sekrole and a Reading Room and Hall near the Arya Mission Hall on the road leading to the Chauk. The *Roman Catholics* also are not unrepresented, and they have a Church (St. Mary's) to the south-west of the Church Mission quarters.

Such are the varied sects and cults that have local habitations here. From times beyond human ken did Hinduism through all its varied stages live here and claim the place for its own ; and even in the present days it is Hinduism of the orthodox type with its diverse forms of worship and ceremonials and visible aspects that holds sway over the whole city and makes it famous as its greatest citadel. The various sects show but the different forms of its development in the different ages, and mark the struggles of the human mind in its attempts towards the attainment of Truth and emancipation from the trammels of convention. The means adopted or the particular forms accepted might have degenerated in growing

years, but it is not only hard but unfair to imagine that their aims were anything but pure at the inception.

Vast as is the field that Hinduism embraces, the gap between seeming idolatry and pure monotheism looks rather wide ; but both exist as parts of the same systematic whole and the gap is bridged over by broadening foot-holds at each successive stage of advance. As we proceed from age to age and from the simplicity of nature-worship to the higher flights of speculative theology, we cannot fail to observe how in the intermediate courses of our progress means have often been converted into ends and symbols mistaken for the very substance they stood for. Introduction of corruptions and fantastic observances following this state of things always necessitates and paves the way for the advent of the Reformer who roots out the weedy growths for a time and is honored and revered for his work, till veneration for his personality waxes and waxes and culminates in his deification. It is thus that almost in the usual course of nature we come 'to make idols of our ideals and divinities of human clay'. The great Gautama, who set up his pure tenets in antagonism to the doctrines prevailing at his time, came thus to be exalted into an incarnation ; and his great opponent Sankaracharya later on was also accorded almost divine honors. Various other teachers followed each other in the different ages, and their adherents and followers grouped themselves

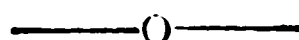
round their respective masters and formed into different sects and gave birth to diverse cults—all, however, linked together in the same unity of spiritual interests. In other religions, too, examples are not scarce of schisms from the established order originating various creeds and sects characterized often by violence and persecutions blackening the pages of history.

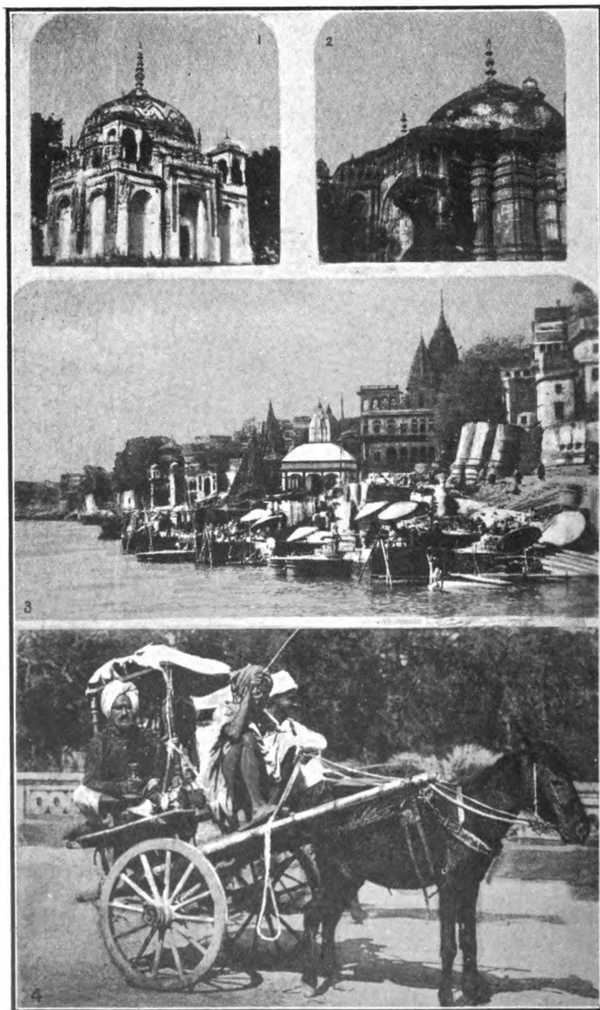
Despite all changes and transformations throughout its chequered career and notwithstanding the growths of rolling years hanging all about its frame, Hinduism has in the main kept itself intact, the pristine purity of its principles being only shrouded in a gloomy mist. Hence it was that the destruction wrought by the fire and sword of the Prophet's followers had hardly any appreciable effect at all upon Hinduism in the long run. Other attempts at proselytising have apparently done but little beyond touching the veriest surface, and why? To impute this attitude of resistance to the mere sentiment of conservatism inherent in man would be furnishing a very feeble answer to the query. Races and tribes that have no definite faith or culture of their own can easily assimilate what is offered to them and provide enough of virgin soil to favor the growth of anything implanted therein; but the very dearth of this makes the case of the Hindus entirely different, for, here in the Hindu world there is hardly any space left fallow, the whole having been reclaimed in ages

long gone by. Preoccupied as the rich Hindu mind has been with the loftiest notions and the highest ideals handed down by their illustrious ancestors from the hoary ages, there is little likelihood of its accepting things that have little of originality or even the charm of novelty for them.

To the world outside, Hinduism appears, no doubt, as a tangled mass hard to comprehend and harder to appreciate. The rough and rugged shapeless shell may, however, have an ugly exterior owing to awkward protuberances upon its surface caused by accretions and accumulations of the passing years, but it shall ever have its value if it encloses the living pearl of the purest lustre within. Such, perhaps, is Hinduism, and the point is, whether it really does enclose the pearl within its shell. The solution is not far to seek. For a people that sent forth the highest ideals of Philosophy and Theology from the earliest of known times and who realised the Divinity as "*Him who exists by Himself, and who is in all because all is in Him,*" no loftier or purer conception of the Absolute and the Supreme could be held forth from any other quarter of the globe or system of religion the wide world over. And hence is the full and complete recognition in the modern times that Hinduism *is* a system with the most perfect and complete conception of the Most High ; and hence has it lived and will live in spite of the apparent freckles upon its exterior, for it has the genuine pearl within unbedimmed

in lustre through the eternal ages. The proclamation by Sri Krishna, that when righteousness decays and evil is rampant then will the Lord Himself come forth and purge religion of its dregs by agencies thought fittest by Him, is not a belief peculiar to Hinduism alone; for, are there not parallels in respect to the saints and prophets of other nations as well—even of Christ among the Israelites and Mahomet among the Arabs, who made their advent in the fulness of time when the exigencies of their nations needed them? So its reformation, not subversion, will come from within it when the inscrutable Providence in His wisdom chooses to have it so!





1. Lal Khan's Tomb.
2. Ruins of Old Visweswara Temple.
3. Scindhia Ghat. 4. An Ekka.

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Chapter V

OF THE OLDEN DAYS

"The greatest glory of a building is not in its stone nor in its gold. Its glory is in its age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity...... It is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour and preciousness of architecture."

—John Ruskin



ELICS of olden days have ever a peculiar charm of their own, and as you contemplate them, a vista of bygone years lit up with glory and magnificence and reminiscent of the triumphs and struggles of the mighty men of the past loom dim in the distance and fade away into the frost of the hoary ages. These are mile-stones on the road of time and each bit of such remains may inclose a mass of unwritten history and needs only the touch of a master-hand to convert its stock-and-stone existence into an object of absorbing interest.

Paucity of old remains

In a city like this of pre-historic ages, it is not unfair to expect a find of such relics in abundance, but the actual paucity of such remains here is rather striking.

Though time and other destructive agencies at work had combined to obliterate much of the land-marks that were of the earliest ages, there are unquestionably some that give us a glimpse into the Buddhist and Moslem periods at least. It was these two faiths that had attempted to supplant the pre-existing one from this place,—the one by moral suasion and the purity and simplicity of its tenets and the other by physical force and the swords of its votaries. The iron hand of devastation that the latter laid upon the city smote the visible vestiges of both the other faiths and left but a few smoking ruins behind as scanty mementos of the past.

It was in the third century B. C., during the ascendency of the Magadha Empire that Buddhism had reached the zenith of its glory and dominated over the Benares district; but hardly a trace of any ancient structure of that period has yet been discovered in the purely Hindu portion of the existing city on the south and by the river-bank, while the remains that are still to be found lie mostly near the Rajghat Fort and Alipur and towards the north-west of the Barana on the way to Sarnath.

In course of his explorations Mr. Sherring, some forty-five years back, found brick and stone debris and bits of sculptured stones scattered over the fields in great abundance on the bank of the Ganges lying to the north-west of the Barana—

Sherring's Researches

leading him to suppose that there was at one time a great city on this spot. Moreover, the scantiness of structural remains of dates earlier than the Buddhistic period coupled with the fact that the destruction of temples and buildings at Benares took place not once but many times over, led him to believe that the oldest site of the city was here and that its modern location would indicate a shifting towards the south-west. Sarnath, according to him, was thus a distinct city extending over some three miles from the bank of the Barana all the way in a northerly direction, and the locality undoubtedly sprang into importance as a Buddhist city since the fifth century B. C. The ancient remains at Bakaria Kund and Rajghat, however, tend to suggest the existence of Buddhist *Viharas* and shrines in these localities also, warranting a belief that the Buddhist city extended to this side of the Barana as well.

Ganj-Sahida-ki Musjid

A look at the remains may now be of interest. Proceeding to the Rajghat Fort, at a short distance to the east of the KASHI station is observed within a walled enclosure the object of the greatest interest here. It is the GANJ-SAHIDA-KI-MUSJID (Mosque of the Assembly of Martyrs) standing upon grounds lower than the level of the surrounding places. It is an open hall covering a space about a hundred and twenty-five feet in length and twenty-five in breadth and contains some

seventy-two richly carved stone pillars with floral embellishments and fine relief works of lotuses upon some of them in various designs of much artistic beauty. The northern ones are shorter and support a roof lower than that over the other pillars, and this portion looks like a later extension to the building. The pillars and the ornamentations upon them point to their having undoubtedly been the relics of Buddhist art now transformed into materials for a later Mahomedan mosque.

Rajghat Fort

Beyond the existence of the high rampart-like eminence of the grounds round about and a large gate further north that we shall presently see, there is not much else of a fort here in this locality at present; but it owes its name to one erected by Raja Banar and a later one built in 1857 by the British Government to overawe the disaffected section of the populace during the Sepoy Mutiny and lately abandoned on account of its unhealthiness.

This plateau of Rajghat extends to the junction of the Barana and the Ganges and rises about fifty feet above the level of the neighbouring land. As commanding not only Benares but a wide extent of country all around, its great stratagical position was recognised even in the most ancient times, and B. N. Chunder in his "*Travels*" writes: "In Manu's time Benares was one of the six independent kingdoms in the valley of the Ganges

The Hindu fort, overlooking that river, guarded its capital in those days from the approach of the Panchala from the west and from the approach of Magadha from the east. Inside the fort there stood the palace of the king. Troops of men, with brilliant sabres and iron-bound clubs protected the royal household. The gates of the citadel were guarded by pikemen bearing long spear, scimitar and buckler. Those who performed duty on the turrets were armed with bows which shot an arrow six feet long. The cavalry, riding upon well-mettled horses, curvetted in all directions. Richly caparisoned elephants – 'their protruding tusks armed with keen sabres' — were driven about, and made a splendid show. Gay cars and war-chariots ran hither and thither through the streets. From this fort poured forth of old the warriors who went to assist the Pandoos on the plains of Kurukshetra. The lieutenants of the Magadha kings lodged in this fort. Raja Deva Pala Deva, the great Buddhist king of Gaur, and his successors, held court here on the second ascendency of their faith in Benares. The province then passed into the hands of the Rathore Kings of Kanouge. The last Raja, Joy Chand, had deposited all his valuable treasures there......In the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, the space enclosed by the walls of the fort swarmed with houses and temples. Various ruins of them are still existing, particularly the remains of a Buddhist Vihara

or temple, probably of the Gupta or the Pal period." This last, however, is not traceable now.

Past the high and imposing structures at the entrance to the Dufferin Bridge and a few yards off the rail-road stands the beautiful old monument (Plate V, 1) over the tomb of Lal Khan, the minister of a Raja of Benares, built in 1182 Hijri. Its grand and lofty dome worked with fine designs in red tiles and blue enamel looking fresh as ever is perhaps the finest of its kind in Benares.

Lal Khan's Tomb

Towards the left, at a little distance is a large circular mound containing three large tombs, and one of its sides adjoins a small hall with another supporting a roof on four plain pillars beneath which is a white marble tomb. The grounds near about are strewn with mounds and raised brick terraces and ruins of walls proving the existence of numerous mansions and structures in the locality in ancient times.

Proceeding along the road leading to the junction of the Barana with the Ganges, we pass by the neglected little temple of *Kharba Vinayak Ganesh* on the left and find a very spacious gateway of great solidity with stairs running to the top. This no doubt is the north-eastern gate of the old fort and looks quite strong and massirve even now, and there is another further off.

A visit to the LAT BHAIRO about a mile to the west of Rajghat. where the Ghazipur Road meets the

Rajghat Road, would be of greater interest than heretofore. Upon a very high and spacious stone-paved terrace above a large tank with stone stairs running into the bottom, stands what is known as *Siva's Lat.* The tank is called the *Kapalmochan* tank or *Bhairo-ka-talao* from the tradition that the god Bhaironath having chopped off one of the five heads of Brahmā it stuck to his hand till after an extensive pilgrimage he came and touched the water of this tank when it dropped down at once and thus relieved him. [1] Hence has this tank been reputed to be sacred; and a temple of Bhaironath was also erected above it, but it was afterwards demolished by the Mahomedns. The Lat is the fragment of a stone column about eight or nine feet high enclosed in copper sheet painted red, and occupies the central place upon the terrace. On the left upon the same terrace is a long narrow open hall used as a mosque by the Mahomedans for prayers, and on the right at a lower level are several Mahomedan *rauzas* or tombs, one of them containing sixteen carved pillars of of early Hindu workmanship. Fragments of beautifully carved stones lie strewn about the cemeteries in the neighbourhood and the banks of the tank.

Lat Bhairo

(1) There is another sacred tank of this name with a similar legend, only substituting Siva for Bhaironath, which is situated on the east bank of the Sarsuti River about 25 miles to the east of Ambala. **Vide** Archæological Survey Reports Vo XIV (1882)

The *Lat* has been supposed to be one of Asoka's columns and originally stood forty feet high, and later on came to be looked upon and venerated as an emblem of Siva. Some Hindu king is said to have brought it over from Sarnath and set it up within the courtyard of the old Visweswara Temple which was afterwards razed to the ground to make room for what was popularly known as Aurangzeb's Mosque. The Lat was, however, allowed to stand in the compound, and the prevailing belief among the Hindus was that Hinduism would retain its glory at Benares as long as this column — which was styled *Kula Stambha* (pillar of caste) — stood erect, and caste-distinction and religion would all disappear as soon as it was levelled to the ground.

Being now within the compound of Aurangzeb's mosque, the Mahomedans claimed a share of the offerings made by the Hindus, and the feelings of the two parties were far from being friendly. The strain reached the breaking point and the rupture came about the beginning of the last century when the *Holi* festival of the Hindus and the *Muhurrum* of the Mahomedans happened to fall on the same day in the year 1809. Processions of the rival parties had to pass along the same route, but neither of them would yi ld a passage to its opponent This quarrel culminated in a fierce riot, and both the parties fought bitterly in the narrow streets causing a good deal of bloodshed. The Mahomedans were beaten, and in revenge they rushed in and

threw down the Lat and broke it to pieces and went the length of slaughtering a cow upon the stone steps in the river tinging the water of the Ganges with blood. The Hindus were infuriated and rose in a mass, and it was with considerable difficulty that a general massacre was prevented by calling in the Military and by the tact and sagacity of the sympathetic Magistrate of Benares, Mr Bird. The Hindu populace grew extremely disconsolate at the desecration and defilement of the sacred stream; and great crowds consisting of all classes of people, laymen and ascetics, crowded the bank of the river and sat in penance for a couple of days together without tasting any food. They were at last convinced that the desecration of the Ganges was not possible, and after the necessary expiatory ceremonies, were prevailed upon to return home. What remained of the Lāt was then removed and placed upon the bank of the Kapālmochan tank in its present site and the copper cap placed over it to save it from further injury and to shut it out from the gaze of the non-Hindus.

Bakaria Kund

We may now pass on to the north-western quarter of the city where lies the BAKARIA KUND, a large rectangular tank in a very neglected condition in the interior approached by narrow lanes. The aspect of this locality must have changed since Mr. Sherring saw it about 1868, for he describes a number of terraces and structures above its banks

and the neighbourhood which cannot now be traced. Numbers of fragments of carved stones lie all about and the banks are in a very filthy state in many parts and not likeley to invite a second visit from any but the most ardent antiquary. To the east of the Kund is a small raised mound surmounted by a circlet of stone about three feet in diameter, with a grouping of over a dozen small figures sculptured around. It is in a very damaged condition and is likely to disappear in a few more years. This is known as *Jogi Bir*, the place where a *Jogi* (ascetic) emancipated himself from his body in *samādhi* and was buried.

On the south side of the tank are three Mahomedan mosques, the central one of which is an open hall with some highly carved pillars apparently of very ancient dates. The *Dargā* (place of prayer) here known as *Fakr-ud-din's Dargā* has near it a musjid erected upon the foundation of an old structure with some beautiful stone pillars standing in rows. An inscription in Persian upon one of the beams of the ceiling is said to bear the name of Feroze Shah and the date 777 Hijri (1375 A. D).

To the west lies a number of other tombs with fine well-proportioned domes, notably those of *Gazi Meah* and *Alai Sahed*, most of which contain remnants of old sculptures. This locality is full of Mahomedan tombs and high stone terraces and

broken pieces of carved stones stacked or strewn about. The abundance of these remains, all of which seem to be of the Buddhistic period, leads to the conjecture that there must have been some large *Vihara* or monastery here in ancient times, and this is matured to a belief when it is found that Hiuen Thsang records having seen some thirty Buddhist monasteries in the district of Benares at his time.

Battis Khamba Mosque

At a little distance from Gazi Meah's tomb is a beautiful structure known as the BATTIS KHAMBA, a large mausoleum with a magnificent dome sheltering a couple of tombs underneath it. It has forty-two plain square pillars,—and not thirty-two as the name would seem to imply,—and has porticoes on all the four sides extending from the middle. Under the cool shade of hoary trees it looks quite a cosy old nook meet for the weary sojourner's final rest.

Arhai Kangura

Another fine mosque is in the quarter of the city going by its name. The ARHAI KANGURA MUSJID, so called from there being two small and another much smaller *Kanguras* (domes) upon the gateway, has a large and shapely lofty dome over the main hall with wings running right and left with their roofs supported upon a dozen square stone pillars. The materials used in the erection of this mosque have

been supposed to have belonged to Hindu as well as Buddhist structures; and there is an inscription in Sanskrit upon a stone slab used in its construction bearing date Samvat 1248 (1191 A. D.) from which Mr. Sherring infers that there was a *muth* of Hindu ascetics here and that the object of the inscription was to testify to the recent Hindu triumph over Buddhism.

Besides a few Mahomedan mosques, such as the *Alamgiri Musjid*, the *Chaukhamba Mosque* and *Aurangzeb's Mosque* near the Jnan Bapi, which we shall find later on, there are no other objects of much antiquarian interest in the city, and many among those observed before are fast falling into decay. The ruins of an old Mahomedan mosque with its rows of sculptured columns and a part of the wall still standing in Tillianallah on the right of the road leading to Rajghat will soon be a thing of the past, as they were being [1] fast dismantled for making room for a modern structure for a Bengali gentleman who has purchased the property. On the left of the road is what is known as *Maqdam Shaheb*, a cluster of Mahomedan tombs with a ruined wall behind it at a distance in a very neglected condition.

So far there has hardly been noticed any purely Buddhistic remains in the heart of the city itself. What have been observed are all mixed up with

(1) October, 1910.

Mahomedan mosques—in fact, such remnants have been found only as materials used in the construction of these structures. Successive and almost systematic devastation and demolition by the Mahomedan invaders and emperors from the eleventh to the seventeenth century had laid low all the Hindu structures. This, probably, is the reason why nothing very ancient can now be discovered here. The brunt of their animosity, to all appearances, fell against the Hindu structures of Benares on account of its reputation, perhaps, of being the strongest foot-hold of Hinduism. The old *Kirtibasseswara Temple* was replaced by the *Alamgiri Mosque* and the *Visweswara* and some other temples had frequently to change their sites to make room for Mahomedan musjids. This would tend to foster the belief that it was the ancient Hindu structures that suffered the most by such vicissitudes. For, the existence of the Hindu city here from the most ancient of times having been indisputably recognised, there could hardly be any other reason for the scarcity of the remains of those days. Buddhism for a time triumphed over Hinduism, and the latter too subsequently subverted it, and all were latterly borne down by the violent zeal of the Prophet's followers; and the result is apparent in the admixture of Hindu and Buddhist materials in some of the Mahomedan structures that have managed

to stand erect up to the present day. A careful scrutiny of Aurangzeb's Mosque behind the Golden Temple standing upon the old terrace and of some other similar edifices would show all the three kinds of materials mixed up together and support the observations made above.

It would, however, appear that the activity and the iconoclastic zeal of the earlier Mahomedans had been confined to Benares proper where they also settled in numbers. Although the outlying Buddhist monasteries were destroyed in the eleventh or the twelfth century as we shall presently see, they did not care to erect mosques or to settle in those localities. Hence it was perhaps that in course of time the ruins mostly disappeared and got buried below the debris and mud till some of them were unearthed lately at Sarnath. Here at this last-named place is a veritable mine of antiquarian wealth that must only be seen to be understood.

About a mile to the west of Kapildhara on the other side of the Barana are a few Buddhistic relics of the past near *Sona-ka-talao* or the Golden Tank. But the real interest will centre in Sarnath whither we must now hie.

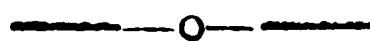
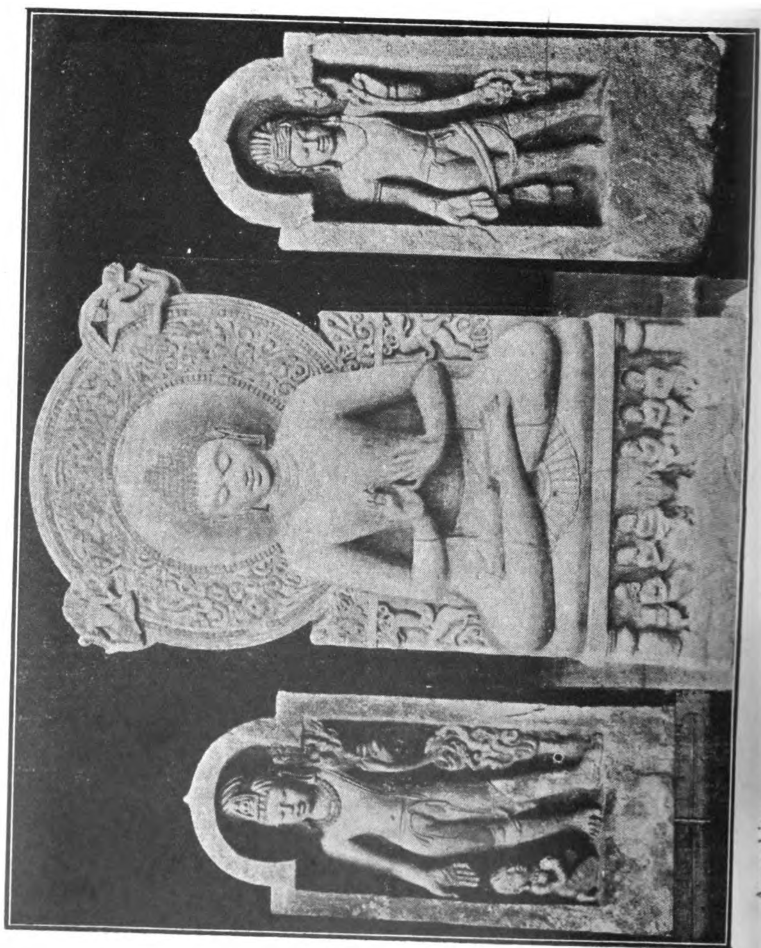


PLATE VI



Chapter VI

SARNATH

I asked of **Time** for whom **those** temples rose,
That prostrate by his hand in silence lie;
His lips disdain'd the myst'ry to disclose
And borne on swifter wing, he hurried by!
The broken columns, whose? I asked of **Fame**:
Her kindling breath gives life to works sublime;
With downcast looks of mingled grief and shame,
She heaved the uncertain sigh, and follow'd **Time.**
Wrapt in amazement o'er the mouldering pile,
I saw **Oblivion** pass with giant stride;
And while his visage wore Pride's scornful smile,
Haply **thou knowest,** then tell me whose, I cried,
Whose these vast domes that ev'n in ruin shine?
I reck not whose, he said, **they now are mine."**

—Byron

ABOUT four miles off to the north lies this repository of the relics of antiquity. Gharriwallahs and ekka-men now come in flocks pestering you with their eager offers of giving you a lift. This last means of locomotion—the *ekka*—is one of the peculiarities of Benares and would merit a passing notice. In riding it one must not mind a little jolting, nor should he think that it is by any means meant for the use of delicate and nervous fair ones. A very light queer-looking two-wheeler (Plate V, 4),

it has a dome-like cloth canopy set upon four carved posts, and the driver sits in front egging the brisk little pony on as it trots to the tune of the tinkling bell fastened to its neck which is covered with trappings of green and red and yellow. But to be just, there seems to be some little comfort in it if one is not very punctilious, for he can have plenty of air and have a look all around while sitting with his legs dangling by the side of the trap or squatting further away in the middle, by way of a novel experience.

To the outskirts of the city proper we go and upon the wide bridge over the Barana—a tiny stream in the cold season now. We leave *Raja Kali Sankar Ghosal's Asylum for the Blind and Leper* founded by him in 1825 and the large *Jail Lunatic Asylum* established in 1810 and the also to the left at a little distance behind. Wide gardens of plum, guava and other fruit-trees enclosed by mud-walls appear on both sides, and the road—the fine broad Gazipore Road, straight as the flight of an arrow—passes through a very pleasant avenue of trees cooled by the shade of their branching arms. A large mound of decent height comes now to view to the right—they name it *Jhawa Jharan* and say that it was formed in a single night by the clods of earth shaken off there from the workmen's baskets on their way home from their labours at Sarnath

Jhawa Jharan

where they had been digging the fine extensive tanks, the Naya Tal and Sarang Tal. Upon the top of this mound stands the small temple of MAHAVIRA.

Soon after, as you take a turning to the left, you go straight for Sarnath, and find another and a larger mound on the left of the road looking like a small hillock about seventy feet high, with fragments of small bricks strewn all over, making it seem as if built of bricks, which to all appearnces it is. As the debris are now being removed remnants of carved stone walls beneath are coming out to view. There is an octagonal brick tower at the top rising to a height of about twenty-five feet which you may ascend, and thence have a splendid view all around over the extensive fields and mango-groves and make a comprehensive survey of the ruins at Sarnath on the north and of the domes and turrets of Benares on the south surmounted by the tall minarets of Aurangzeb's mosque. Inside, you find a deep and spacious hollow in the centre—a well sunk by General Cunningham for explorations. It was formerly a Buddhist STUPA or memorial mound with the top like an inverted alms-bowl surmounted by an arrow,—the same, perhaps, which Hiuen Thsang had reported having seen standing to a height of about three hundred feet 'sparkling with the rarest and the most precious jewels'. According to him it

Humayun's Tower

marked the spot where Buddha on his arrival at Sarnath from Gaya first met his five former associates, Ajnāta Kaundīnya and others, who had forsaken their master at Uruvilva. A couple of standing Bodhisattwa figures beautifully carved in relief on upright stone panels—now preserved in the small museum at Sarnath,—have been dug out here, one representing MAITREYA (Plate VI), the coming Buddha, and the other AVALOKITESWARA (Plate VI), the personification of compassion. A pair of beautiful sculptures (Plate VIII, 5) with a rampant leogryph in each ridden by a figure armed with a sword have also been found here in an excellent state of preservation. This mound was formerly known as the CHAUKHANDI or the 'square' mound, and there were three square terraces one above the other accounting for the origin of the name. It was also called *Luri-ka-kodan* or Luri's Leap after an Ahir cow-herd named Luri who jumped from the tower at the request of his sweet-heart and was killed.

The remains of the ruined *Stupa* now measure about a hundred feet above the ground level. The octagonal tower surmounting the mound was erected in 1588 A. D. and an inscription in Arabic ran to the effect that 'as Humayun, King of the Seven Climes, now residing in paradise, deigned to come and sit here one day, thereby increasing the splendour of the Sun, so Akbar his son and humble servant

resolved to build on this spot a lofty tower reaching to the blue sky'. Hence this is also known by the name of HUMAYUN'S TOWER.

The Dhamek

Something over half a mile forward, upon a slightly rising ground, the great Sarnath Stupa (Plate VII, 1), raises itself and rears its crown on high. It is known as the DHAMEK—an abbreviation according to General Cunningham, of the word *Dharmopadesak* (preacher of the law); but Mr. Venis considers the real word to be *Dharmeksha* meaning 'the pondering of the law' a view supported by a Jaina manuscript bearing date 1669 Samvat (1612 A. D.) in which the word Dharmeksha occurs as the name of a locality containing a famous Bodhisattwa sanctuary. This large round column of brick and stone, 110 feet high and 93 feet in diameter, was erected as a memorial tower to mark this blessed spot where, according to Mr. Oertel, 'Maitreya received an assurance from Sakya Muni that he would be the next Buddha.' From the top to about halfway down, this magnificent pile looks stripped of its stony skin and ragged brickwork appears overgrown with grass and weeds. The rest of the column up to a height of about thirty-seven feet from the ground, is of massive stones attached to one another by solid iron clamps, with remains of beautiful carvings, floral ornamentations and geometrical figures upon some of them. There are eight

niches on its eight projecting faces in the lower part of the monument designed to hold life-size images of Buddha; the floral decorations all round the western niche are exceedingly fine and elaborate and those on the eastern one covered over with gold leaf. The rich carvings at the base are considered to have been interrupted by the first Mahomedan invaders of the eleventh century and the unfinished state of the Dhamek has been considered to lead to the conclusion that this was the last memorial of the kind constructed here. Mr. Marshall, however, attributes the Dhamek to the Gupta period on account of the carvings and the ornate floral arabesques characteristic of that age.

It was in 1835 that General Cunningham explored this stupa by sinking a shaft right down from its top and found an inscribed stone slab inside containing the usual formula or profession of Buddhist faith— *Ye Dharma hetu prabhaba, &c* —in characters earlier than the Tibetan alphabet, which led him to ascribe the sixth century as the period in which this monument was first erected. In a corner in the Archœological Section of the Indian Museum at Calcutta containing numbers of inscribed slabs, lies this same slab of yellowish Chunar stone measuring about a quarter and two feet in length by a foot and a half in breadth with three lines of neat and fairly legible inscriptions

thereupon; and visitors are apprised by a note at the foot that it was "found by General Cunningham in 1835, three feet from the top of the great tower called Dāmek in Sārnātha, Benares."

There was formerly a large park here within enclosing walls, and even in the sixth century B. C., before the advent of Buddha, large numbers of ascetics and religious devotees of all denominations lived here in seclusion and safety. This locality was then known by the name of *Rishipattana* (the abode of the sages)—also, *Isipattana* (the abode of the gods). The modern name *Sarnath* was after the name *Sàranganāth*, the Lord of the deer—an epithet of Buddha; but this derivation is open to doubt. Legend relates that in one of his previous births Buddha was a deer 'golden of hue,' with eyes like round jewels and horns of silvery sheen and mouth as 'red as a bunch of scarlet cloth.' He dwelt in the forest under the name of the Banyan Deer (*Nyagrodha mriga*) and was the king of a herd of five hundred deer, out of which one was daily chosen by lot in accordance with an arrangement with Brahmadatta, the Raja of Benares, and sent to him for his kitchen with the object of preventing indiscriminate slaughter which used to follow his too frequent hunting excursions. Once on a time came the turn of a doe great with young belonging to the herd of his cousin who

Rishipattana or the Deer Park

represented to the king of the deer that though she might die, the time of her young one had not yet come; and she, therefore, begged to be spared. Thereupon, in great compassion the king of the deer approached the place of execution and lay down with his head on the block and offered himself for slaughter in her stead. Surprised on seeing the king of the deer, the cook went and informed the Raja of Benares, who mounted his chariot and came in all haste with a large following. Finding that the golden king of the deer had come to lay down his life for the doe and hearing his wise discourse, he said he had never yet seen, even among men, one so abounding in charity, love and pity. The Raja's eyes being thus opened now he exclaimed—"I have indeed the body of a man, but am as a deer. You have the body of a deer, but are as a man." From that time forth the practice ceased and the park, which was the King's pleasaunce whither the herds had been driven and confined, was given over to the perpetual use of the deer, and it came to be known as *Mriga-dāva*—the DEER PARK. Thus is the *Nigrodha-Miga-Jātaka* tale, one of the birth-stories of Buddha, related by Hiuen Thsang. It may be intersting to note that this episode is figured in the stupa of Barhut and forms the subject of one of the numerous beautiful colored frescoes upon the ancient walls of the famous Ajanta Caves,

where Buddha has been represented as the Royal Antelope interceding with the King seated upon a chariot with the royal umbrella held over him.

It was in the fifth century before Christ that Prince GAUTAMA of Kapilavastu, able no longer to bear the sight of human miseries, abandoned his home of pleasure and enjoyment in the very prime of life when he was only twenty-nine, and forsook his loving parents, beloved wife and darling new-born child in order to seek for the means of alleviating human sufferings and securing eternal bliss for man. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth and nursed and bred in the lap of luxury, he subjected himself to no end of privations — all for the love of his fellow-beings. Six years and more he toiled in the Vindhyan mountains and elsewhere with five followers who had accompanied him, studying the Hindu philosophy and practising the austerities enjoined by the orthodox doctrines, but could obtain neither peace nor satisfaction. Tired at last he wandered towards Gaya all alone forsaken by his companions, and under the sacred tree of wisdom—*Bodhi-druma*—at Bodh Gaya, he sat in contemplation for long and weary years together till the Divine Light dawned upon him.

Buddha

Five miles to the south of the city of Gaya lies the famous Bodhi tree immediately to the west of the great Bodh-Gaya temple. Hiuen Thsang relates that

the Bodhi-tree was destroyed by Asoka before his conversion and once again by his queen, but each time it was miraculously renewed. About 600 A. D. Sasangka, a king of Bengal, again destroyed it, but it reappeared some months afterwards. The existing tree must have succeeded this or some other as obviously it cannot from its very appearance claim antiquity from the seventh century. Upon the platform where stands the holy tree was the famous *Vajrāsana* or diamond throne which Hiuen Thsang saw in existence in 637 A. D. Behind the temple near the back wall is now a square slab of stone upon the platform which is pointed out to the traveller as the spot where Buddha had sat in contemplation. The grand temple rising to a height of over a hundred and fifty feet gives some idea of the solidity and architectural magnificence of the early works. If at Sarnath are the dead bones of the past, Bodh-Gaya is still instinct with life and Buddhist monks still sit in devotion in front of the grand figure of Gautama inside the temple.

Bodhi-tree at Bodh-Gaya

A fortunate day it was for the world when in B. C. 522 the great Master, then only thirty-six, came out of his seclusion, and at the end of sixty days after his attainment of the Light directed his steps towards Isipattana, and chose this place of all places—the meeting-ground of the religious recluses of all sects—as the spot whence to

disseminate his great light of *Dharma* throughout the world. All alone he travelled all the long distance through, till he arrived at this Rishipattana monastery where he found his five former hermit-associates who had deserted him before. They now became the first converts to his new religion; and here at Sarnath he preached his first sermon and initiated the five famous Bhikkus, and sent them about on their mission of revealing the light to the world which was destined to illuminate later on not only India and Ceylon but the far-off China and Japan and Tibet and Burmah as well. His ministry continued for five and forty years until his attainment of Nirvana in B. C. 477 at the advanced age of eighty[1].

Fa Hian

The Chinese pilgrim FA HIAN who travelled all over India between 400 and 411 A. D. gives us the first definite informations about this locality as it was at the beginuing of the fifth century. He speaks of the '*Deer Park of the Immortal*' as lying about two miles off to the north-west of *P'o-lo-ni'-sse* (Benares) and of a temple and two monasteries therein, and makes mention of a small shrine and four topes—one to mark the spot where on his arrival the five associates of Buddha rose

(1) Prof. Rhys David in the Encyclopœdia Brittanica takes the age of Buddha as 568—488 B. C.

up to salute him, another where he turned the '*Wheel of Law*,' a third where he foretold the coming of Maitreya Buddha, and a fourth one where a certain Nāga named Elapattra held discourse with him.

Fa Hian was followed by the other traveller HIUEN THSANG in the middle of the seventh century (629—645 A.D), and the latter has left a graphic account in his great work '*Si-yu-ki*' of what he had observed here. Speaking of the people and the general aspect of the country he remarks: "The people are gentle and polished, and esteem most highly men given to study. The greater portion of them believe in the heretical doctrines (Hinduism), and few revere the Law (religion) of Buddha. The climate is temperate, grain is abundant, the fruit-trees are luxuriant, and the earth is covered with tufted vegetation." He saw Buddhists from various places living in huts and caves in the Deer Park, Jainas and Bhikkus, followers of Siva and Krishna, philosophers and students of the Brahmanical School—all living in harmony, discussing and exchanging ideas and tolerating one another's views. He found the Deer Park portioned out into eight sections and a high wall round the compound enclosing a large *Vihara* or temple-monastery about two hundred feet high, with over a hundred rows of niches in tiers over tiers each

Hiuen Thsang

holding a golden statuette of Buddha and a gold-covered figure of the mango fruit (*āmra*) above the roof; and in the middle of the Vihara was a large bronze statue of Buddha seated upon a throne and posed in the attitude of the Teacher expounding his doctrines. There were splendid two-storied buildings in the monastery with numbers of cells symmetrically arranged and accomodating no less than fifteen hundred *bhikkus*, and hundreds of sacred monuments and memorials and votive stupas strewn all about the compound. To the west of the monastery lay a tank in which Buddha used to bathe and two others in which he washed his water-pot and his clothes. Upon the bank of this last was a large square block of stone containing marks of thread-lines of the web of the cloth, upon which Buddha used to place his *kashāya* (ochre robes) to dry.

The Asoka Pillar

Towards the south-west portion of the Vihara, according to Hiuen Thsang, stood the remains of one of Asoka's stupas, even then a hundred feet in height, and in front of it was a smooth *pillar of stone* 'bright and shining like a mirror' and seventy feet high, marking THE VERY SPOT WHERE BUDDHA HAD DELIVERED HIS FIRST DISCOURSE. 'Its surface is glistening and smooth as ice, and on it can be constanly seen the figure of Buddha as a shadow'[1]—thus chronicles

(1) H. Thsang's Si-yu-ki, translated by S. Beal Vol II. p. 45.

the great Hiuen Thsang in his accounts. This spot has now been located just to the west of what is known as the *Main Shrine* (Plate VII, 2); and the standing stump of a sandstone column 16 feet 8 inches in height bearing an edict of Emperor Asoka in fairly legible characters and erected about 249 B. C. has been exhumed out of the ruins (Plate VII, 2, 4). The fragments of its upper portion in four broken pieces, round, smooth and highly polished, have been found lying near it together with the famous *Lion-Capital* that stood on the top of the column. The fragments still lie by the side of the western wall of the Main Shrine, and the Lion-Capital has been placed in the Sarnath museum. This stump of the pillar bears eleven lines of inscriptions—eight of which are still wonderfully clear and distinct —containing the edict of Asoka. Mr. A. Venis interprets the *sāsana* or injunction contained in the edict in the following manner: "The Church is not to be divided. But whoever will break up the Church, be it monk or nun, must be made to put on white dress and live in a place which is not a formal residence [*i. e.* beyond the official boundaries of convent or monastery]. Thus must this edict be announced to the Order of Monks and to the Order of Nuns."[1] His Majesty's command was also to be made known to the lay members as well in all towns and districts and provinces, that they might

(1) Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, (Vol. III 1907) p. 2.



1. The Dhamek (a) and its neighbourhood.
2. The Main Shrine and Lion-Capital.
3. Old Walls in the excavations. 4. Asoka Column.

P. 97

everywhere 'walk according to the proclamation.' Two more lines had been lately added "in the fortunate reign of Rājan Asvaghosha in the fortieth year" and in token of the "homage of the masters of the Sammitiya sect and of the Vatsiputrika school" in the Gupta Period. [1]

The Lion-Capital

The LION-CAPITAL (Plate VII, 2) that surmounted the Asoka pillar is of the Persipolian bell-shaped type containing four magnificent lions standing back to back with a large stone wheel (the sacred symbol of the *Dharma Chakra*) in the middle upon a circular block, which is decorated with the figures of an elephant, a lion, a bull, a horse, and four wheels among them. In spite of its great age of two and twenty centuries, the Lion-Capital, standing no less than seven feet high and superb in its execution, looks wonderfully fresh and clear-cut just as it was when it came from the sculptor's hands. It has been pronounced by several art-critics to be the finest piece of sculpture so far discovered in India. [2] This furnishes full and

(1) Epigraphia Indica Vol. VIII pp and ff.

(2) In this connection it may be interesting to note that General Cunningham in the Archœological Survey Reports Vol X (1880) makes mention of a similar Lion-Capital which he discovered lying near the broken shaft of a small monolith standing to the north of the great Buddhist stupa at

complete corroboration to Hiuen Thsang's descriptions and enables one to realise the grandeur and magnificence which the place had attained as the nursing-ground of Buddhism. Besides *Kapilavastu* the birth-place of Buddha—the site of which has been discovered to be the modern Bhuila Dih in Pargana Mansurnagar in the district of Basti (N. W. P.),—*Gaya* where he was inspired, and the *Kusinagar* where he obtained *Nirvana*—identified with the modern village of Kasia, 35 miles due east of Gorakhpur, where lies the ruined temple of Nirvana,—*Sarnath* is the fourth place of pilgrimage which Buddhists from Burma, Tibet, China, Siam and Japan still visit.

Alas! the times! Though this great religion of Universal Love reckoned within its fold more than a half of the human race between the fifth and the tenth centuries, and still commands the allegiance of a third of it, not a single abode of any of its votaries is now to be found near about the place whence the light had first emanated—nor even in fa[r] off Benares! Only a small *Dharmasala* for housing

Sanchi in Bhopal, bearing a line of Gupta characters. It was "a bell-shaped capital, 18·15 inches in diameter and 15 inches in height with a circular abacus 19½ inches in diameter ornamented with birds and flowers. On the top stand four lions back to back, above whom rises a Dharma Chakra or 'Holy Wheel' 20 inches in diameter." (See Plate XXI in the Vol.)

pilgrims lies to the east of the Dhamek and another is now being built to the west of the excavations made here. Very close, however, to the great tower of Dhamek and to its south-east (Plate VII, 1) now rises the slender spire of the modern JAINA TEMPLE of the Degambara sect erected in 1824, which contains the foot-prints and a white marble statue of the eleventh Tirthankara (saint) *Amsanath* who became an *Arhat* at Singhpur, a village to the north-west of Sarnath. About a mile off further to the south-east and nestled upon a hillock lies also the temple of *Sarnath* and *Somnath Sivas*—the two in one—in a fine quiet and retired corner; but there is not the slightest trace of the living Buddhism near about !

Jaina Temple

Siva Temple

In 1794 some workmen in the employ of Jagat Singh, the Dewan of Raja Chet Singh of Benares, had been engaged in digging out old bricks from a ruined stupa about a hundred and seventy-five yards to the west of the Dhamek. This has been supposed to have originally been a hemispherical relic tower, '82 feet in diameter and not less than 50 feet in height.' In course of their work they lighted upon a couple of marble vessels—one inside the other and a statue of Buddha bearing an inscription with the name of King Mahipal of

Jagat Singh's Stupa

the Pala dynasty of Bengal dated Samvat 1083 (1026 A. D.), at a depth of twenty-seven feet from the top. The inner one of the two vessels was 'a cylindrical box of green marble containing forty to forty-six pearls, fourteen rubies, eight silver and nine gold ear-rings and three pieces of human arm-bones.' The inscription upon the statue of Buddha referred to above ran to this effect:

> "Mahipal, Raja of Gaur (Bengal) having worshipped the lotus-like feet of Sree *Dharmasi* (Buddha), caused to be erected in Kasi hundreds of *Isana* (lamp pillars) and *Chitraghanta* (ornamental bells). Sree Sthira Pal and his younger brother Vasanta Pal having restored religion raised this tower with an inner chamber and eight large niches."

Sthira Pal and Vasanta Pal were reported to be sons of King Mahipal and were sent by him in 1026 A. D. to Benares to repair *the* Dhamek and *the* Dharma Chakra 'where Buddha preached for the first time' and also to construct a *Gandhakuti* or temple of Buddha.

This interesting find in Jagat Singh's stupa came to light afterwards and the statue was recovered in a mutilated state by Major Kittoe in Jagatgunj, and eventually found its way to the Lucknow Museum. The

discovery was followed up by Jonathan Duncan who made some exploration of the ruins at

Researches

the close of the eighteenth century. The first reported exploration of this kind was by Col. C. Mackenzie in 1815. In 1835 General Cunningham succeeded in getting hold of a very old inhabitant of the neighbouring village of Singhpur, named Sangkar, who had worked for Jagat Singh in his boyhood and who now pointed out to him the site of the stupa in question. This enabled him to excavate and find therein the outer case which was of Chunar sand stone with a cylindrical chamber in the centre to hold the inner marble box, and he presented it to the Asiatic Society of Bengal. It is now to be seen in the Archœological section of the Indian Museum at Calcutta. It is a cubical block of rough blackish stone a little over two feet each way with a hole scooped out in the middle some ten inches deep and about a foot in diameter, lying on the floor with a number of Buddha statues, the earlier finds at Sarnath, ranged along the wall.

General Cunningham records in his report that he found to the north of the tank near the site of the monastery a large single block of stone six feet in length and three feet in height and of the same thickness, carefully squared and hollowed out underneath to form a small chamber four feet in length

and two in breadth and height. This he believed to have been the famous stone upon which Buddha used to spread out his vestments to dry. He left it undisturbed where it lay, but when he came to search for it after some years it had unfortunately disappeared.

Since then there were some desultory attempts to explore the grounds by Mr. E. Thomas (Judge of Benares), Dr Frederick Hall, Major Kittoe and others. In 1856 the Government acquired the site of the ruins from one Fergusson, an indigo planter and after some further attempts, the work of exploration was systematically taken up by the Archœological Survey Department of the Government of India in right earnest about 1903-1904. and the excavations were conducted under the directions of Mr. J. H. Marshall and Mr. F. O. Oertel and there were interesting finds in 1905 and subsequent years as well that have amply rewarded their labours.

Success has, so far, attended their efforts as will appear from the fine collection of hundreds of relics and art-treasures of ancient times gathered together under the roof of a small open Museum a little to the west of the Dhamek, waiting their removal [1] to the pretty houses of the new Museum

(1) They have since been removed to the new Museum.

now being built for them further to the south-west. The larger pieces lie strewn outside, all sorted and numbered and duly catalogued, and up to 1904—1905 the figures showed 476 pieces of sculpture and 41 inscriptions. A number of the earlier finds had been sent to the Bengal Asiatic Society which they transferred to the Indian Museum at Calcutta; some sent to the Queen's College here were lately sent back to Sarnath under the directions of Lord Curzon when he went to visit the College, and they are now in the Museum near the Dhamek; and some others found their way to the Lucknow Museum. It may not be out of place here to note regretfully that over forty of the statues collected by General Cunningham in 1835—1836 and unsuspectingly left here to wait removal to a better repository, could not escape the inordinate zeal of a Mr. Davidson, sometime Magistrate of Benares, who, not having perhaps been blessed with any idea of art or of the sacredness attaching to antiquity, or perhaps nursing a supreme contempt for both, had them carted away and thrown into the Barana to serve as a breakwater under the arches of its bridge!

Modern aspects

We may now have a glance of the general aspect of this locality. The grounds are undulating and the Dhamek stands over a hundred and twenty feet above the general level of country (Plate VII,.1).

The stretch of space between the Dhamek and the Humayun Tower, half a mile in breadth, cover stone debris and extensive ruins. The excavations have laid bare what seem to have been the cells and walls of a *Vihara* or chapel-monastery with votive stupas and shrines. The remains of the spacious structures extending over a wide area agree well with the descriptions given by Hiuen Thsang of the temples and buildings and tanks in the Deer Park. These cells and buildings seem, in all likelihood to have been originally intended for Buddhist monks who lived in solitude and engaged in worship and divine contemplation; and they were later on enriched, enlarged and added to by various Buddhist Kings of later times.

The destruction of the monastery and its abandonment had, according to Major Kittoe, been due to sudden conflagration of which sufficient traces had been found in tbe ruined chambers in the shape of charred wood, calcined bones, heaps of ashes, remains of wheaten cakes, and hastily abandoned uncooked food. Writes Major Kittoe: "All has been sacked and burned — priests, temples, idols all together; for in some places, bones, iron, wood and stone are found in huge masses." This must have occured in the twelfth century when, according to Mr. Neville, the Mahomedan iconoclasts under Kutb-ud-din Aibak carried on their work of

destruction and devastation with fire and sword, and sacked and destroyed the temples and shrines at Benares and its neighbourhood.

The Excavations

Excavations have laid bare the foundations of a conspicuous structure of massive walls lying to the north-west of the Dhamek, about ninety-five feet in length and ninety feet in breadth, which is now styled the MAIN SHRINE, still standing eighteen feet high, with stumps of the famous Asoka column in front of it (Plate VII,2). In one of the small chapels to the south is a STONE RAILING enclosing a stupa like a square fence. It stands four feet and three quarters high and is eight and a half feet in length on each side. It is of yellow stone and has lozenge-shaped cross-bars cut entire from one single block exquisitely chiselled and polished and bears a line of inscription placing its erection in or before the first century B. C. Somewhat similar to this though of rough workmanship is the outer stone-railing of the Bodh-Gaya temple which bears inscriptions of Asoka's age. Numbers of small chapels (Plate VIII,3) lie on every side of the Main Shrine and there are some admirably constructed stupas at the south-west corner. Several tiny *Seals* with miniature inscriptions upon them were found to the west of this Shrine.

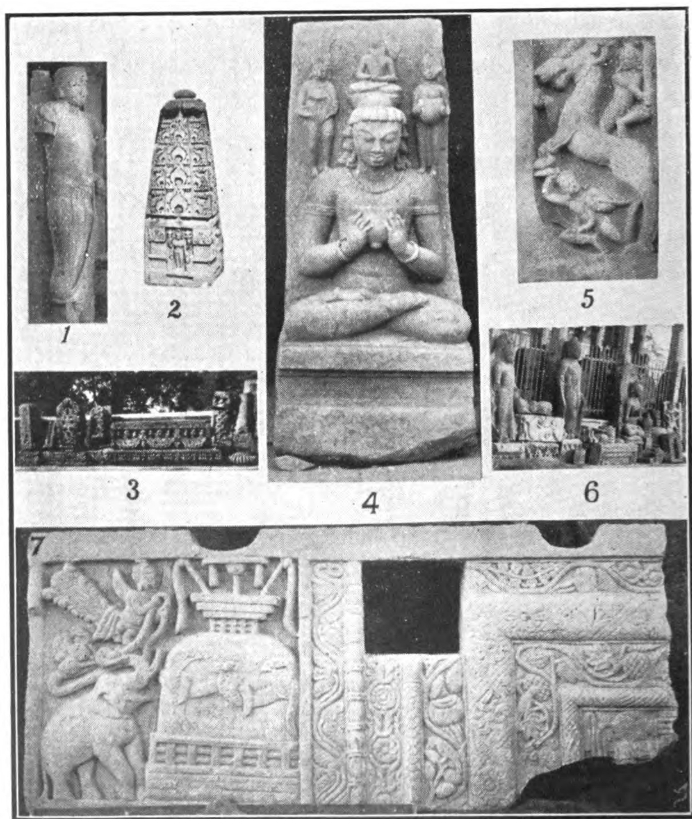
Another *large monastery* has been dug out further to the north-east consisting of a fine block of

buildings with a spacious entrance facing the east and a paved courtyard on the west. The whole site appears to have been enclosed by a massive circuit wall, and a section of it apparently, nine feet thick and very solidly built, has been brought to light alongside the *Jhil* lying on the west.

Exceedingly rich in sculpture these chapels and the shrines must have been as the remains exhumed from the ruins would clearly testify; and all the chambers had their full complement of large images of Buddha in various attitudes, with his life-stories beautifully figured in the old Indian style upon stones imbedded in the walls. A full dressed *life-size image of Bodhisattwa* is still to be seen in the excavations there standing erect all these centuries in the place assigned to it. But to have something like an adequate realisation of the ancient Indian Art dating hundreds of years back we must return to the relics themselves in the small Museum close by.

The Museum

Here in this house you find a large number of lovely images of Buddha, large and small, cut in various kinds of stones — mostly yellowish Chunar stone—posed in various attitudes (Plate VIII,6). Besides statues of Buddha there are several of a number of gods and goddesses as well — such as, *Parvati* and her elephant-headed child *Ganesh*, *Saraswati* with her Vina in hand, *Marichi* or Dawn with her six



1. Bodhi Sattwa Statue.
2. Votive memorial.
3. Some Sculptures.
4. Buddha with alms-bowl.
5. Mara.
6. A group of Buddha Statues.
7. Sculptured fragment respresenting Ramagrama Stupa.

arms, and the gorgeously decked *Tara*. Small figures of *Dhyāni Buddha* have also been introduced into the head-dress of some of the statuettes of Tara. The statues and the bas-reliefs were for the most part recovered from a chamber in the monastery and a small detached building about ten feet square, huddled up together showing as if they had all been kept there in concealment to save them from destruction during a time of panic or persecution.

Bodhisattwa statues

A large number of *full-size Bodhi-sattwa statues*, some of them of colossal proportions, are noticeable — especially one in red sandstone (Plate VIII, 1) standing nine and half feet high and bearing an inscription at the foot dated in the third year of the reign of King Kanishka who conquered Kashmir in the first century after Christ. This is considered to be *the oldest* inscribed image found; and near it was lying a large beautifully carved umbrella, also of the third year of King Kanishka, and of the Kushana epoch.

The Umbrella

It is of red sandstone and is ten feet in diameter. The stump of the tall round massive red sandstone pillar about five feet high, which supported the umbrella stood in its place between the Main Shrine and Jagat Singh's stupa. This umbrella now lying upon the the floor is partly broken but on the whole looks

intact. It is a lovely work of art in the shape of an inverted full-blown lotus with circular rings one inside the other carved with figures of conch, fish, fruits, and flower vases, the mystic symbols of the Cross and the *Triratna* (the three Jewels—*Buddha*, *Dharma* or law, and *Sangha* or the Community of the Buddhists), and also of lion, bull, camel, antelope, &c. — numbering two dozen in all.

Buddha as Teacher

Among a number of Buddha figures of all sizes ranged on all sides, a very graceful *seated figure of Buddha* with a serene and benign look lighting up a face full of beauty and dignity and reminding one of the similar charms of the famous image of Prajnaparamita (of the Mahayana Buddhists, Java) seated on a lotus-bed, cannot fail to attract notice at the very first sight (Plate VI). A large halo (*prabha mandal*) highly decorated with floral embellishments is behind the head ; it is also taken by some to represent the symbolic Dharma-chakra, the Wheel of Law. The attitude of sitting cross-legged with the forefinger of the right hand crossed over that of the left as if to accentuate his reasonings and carry his agruments home to the listeners, show that he is here represented in the act of preaching or '*turning the wheel of law*' as the phrase goes. The five disciples and worshippers are seated below with joined palms and two deer are on either side of the statue.

There are some other seated figures of Buddha, but with the left hand resting upon the lap and the right touching the earth in what is known as the *Bhumi-sparsha Mudrā*, as if to call upon her to bear witness to the good deeds of his previous existences when he was being assailed with temptations by Mara, the Spirit of Evil. This is the attitude in which Buddha is posed in the large statue at Bodh-Gaya, and is by far the most frequently to be met with.

Another *seated statue* finely decorated holding an alms-bowl in front of the breast (Plate VIII, 4) with a Dhyani-Buddha upon the crown of the head and two figures male and female standing over the shoulders bowl in hand, is taken to be a representation of Avalokiteswara and is in an excellent state of preservation. So is another *standing figure* of Buddha in spotted white sandstone in the attitude of offering blessings. Numerous other seated Buddhas are there with the usual Buddhist creed or *gāthā* inscribed at the foot—

'*Ye dharma hetuprabhaba hetum tesham Tathagata hyavadat.*
Tesham cha yo nirodha evambadi Mahasramanah.'

—which Hodgson explains as signifying that "of all things proceeding from cause, their cause hath the *Tathagatha* (Buddha) explained. The great *Sramana*

(Buddha) hath likewise explained the causes of the cessation of existence."

Three lovely bas-reliefs (Plate IX, 1 middle) carved with small figures illustrating incidents in the life of Buddha,—the conception, the birth, the flight from Kapilvastu, the temptations of Mara, the contemplation under the Bodhi-tree, the first sermon, and the death-scene or the final Nirvana, — would hold your admiring eyes captive for long. So delicate are the delineations and done with such consummate skill that the graceful expressions appeal directly to the mind at the very first glance. *One fragment* of a carved piece which probably decorated some doorway calls for prominent notice. It represents a beautifully worked stupa with an elephant and a winged figure placing a garland of flowers upon it, illustrating the legend of the worship of Buddha's relics by wild elephants in the stupa of Ramagrama. The floral ornamentations, the lotus, the vine-leaves and grapes, and a tiny parrot taking a bite with its beak at the dainty fruits, look wonderfully fresh and clear (Plate VIII, 7).

Khantivadi Jataka

A very interesting find is a large lintel five yards long and over two feet in height in an excellent state of preservation, depicting a few scenes from the *Khantivadi Jataka*, one of the most

remarkable birth-stories of Buddha that would bear repetition. In one of his previous births Buddha under the name of Kundaka Kumara was living the life of an ascetic in the Himalayas and used occasionally to come down to Benares and take up his abode in the royal park. Kalabu, the King of Kasi, then reigning in Benares, one day came to the park surrounded by a company of dancers and musicians who provided a musical entertainment for him. While listening to them he laid his head upon the lap of a favourite of the harem and fell asleep. Thereupon, finding further singing and dances useless, the singers and dancers dispersed in the garden and betook to disporting themselves. The Bodhisattwa being seated in the garden they approached him and besought him to give them a discourse. The King in the meanwhile awoke, and finding the women had gone became very wroth and came to the place where they were. He queried the Bodhisattwa as to what doctrine he preached, and the latter answered, 'the doctrine of patience, Your Majesty,' and explained that patience was 'the not being angry, when men abuse you and strike you and revile you.' 'To see the reality' of his patience, the King had him scourged with a lash of thorns all over the body, and 'the outer and the inner skins were cut through the flesh and the blood flowed.' On being told that he still preached the doctrine of patience

which was not merely 'skin-deep' in him, the King had both his hands cut off and his feet as well, and at last his nose and ears,—each time repeating his question as to what doctrine he would still preach and being told in reply that his patience dwelt not in the extremities of his hands and feet nor in the tips of his nose and ears but was seated deep within his heart,—whereupon the King struck him above his heart with his foot and went away. The Bodhisattwa exclaimed.

'Long live the King, whose cruel hand my body has thus marred,
Pure souls like mine such deeds as these with anger ne'er regard.'

But just as the King was passing out of the garden, 'the mighty earth that is forty-thousand leagues in thickness split in two, like unto a strong cloth garment, and a flame issuing forth from Avici (hell) seized upon the King, wrapping him up as it were with a royal robe of scarlet wool'.

The Gupta Lintel

Besides neatly cut figures and ornamental embellishments (Plate IX, 4), the finely chiselled representations of the dancing girls waving their bodies gracefully to the tunes of flutes and timbrels played by their associates grouped behind them, and of the ascetic with the light of divine serenity upon his face preaching and being listened to with rapt

attention by the women sitting in front, and of the Bodhisattva being tortured and his hands being chopped off by the executioner's sword as he holds them forward in all meekness,—all exhibit the high state of proficiency the artists of those ages had attained and remind forcibly of the similar subjects depicted in the lovely reproductions of the Borobudur reliefs of Java in Mr. Havell's charming book, *The Indian Sculpture and Painting*, and in the photos taken by Mr. Percy Brown, Principal of the Government School of Art at Calcutta, lately on view in the last Allahabad Exhibition. The figures are exquisitely fine and expressive and the floral decorations wonderfully neat and beautiful. This lintel has been ascribed to the later Gupta age, and a portion of it to the left is blackened and seems to bear marks of singeing by fire thus proving the fact of the late conflagration. Another large lintel has also been found, but the figures thereon are mostly worn out and obliterated.

Rama Laksman Panel

Two pieces of sculptured slabs evidently not of Buddhist make deserve prominent notice as they point to the presence and influence of Hinduism in the locality. One of them (Plate IX, 3) is devoted to Rāma and Laksman with their bows and arrows and Hanuman and the monkeys busily handling large stone blocks,— illustrating, perhaps, the preparations for the deliverance of

—8

Sita and the attempt at bridging the sea by means of huge stones for the purpose of reaching King Ravana's stronghold Lanka (Ceylon). Unfortunately, it is in a damaged state, for many of the figures look mutilated and details have thus been lost. The other one is a very striking and gigantic figure of Siva, crushing a person crouched under one upraised leg, and holding in one hand a trident having a female figure surmounting it and in another a human skull.

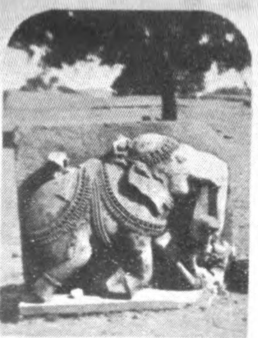
Siva Statue

Various kinds of sculptures from floral and artistic designs on friezes and cornices (Plate VIII, 3) to heads of frowning lions and elephants (Plate IX, 2) and even huge earthen pots and small lamps and other household utensils, have been unearthed in numbers, and art connoisseurs have ascribed them to four distinct epochs of the Mauryan, Kushana and Gupta Kings and of years later to them. It is not possible for any but the artists and antiquarians to descant upon their significance in Art or to discuss about their age as measured in centuries, nor is that within the scope of a work like this.

So, here ends our pleasant visit to old Sarnath which has furnished us with materials enough for reflections regarding the Past and its lessons upon the insignificance and the transitory nature of all earthly grandeur and glory and for leisurely cogitations about the Future and its hazy outlook.



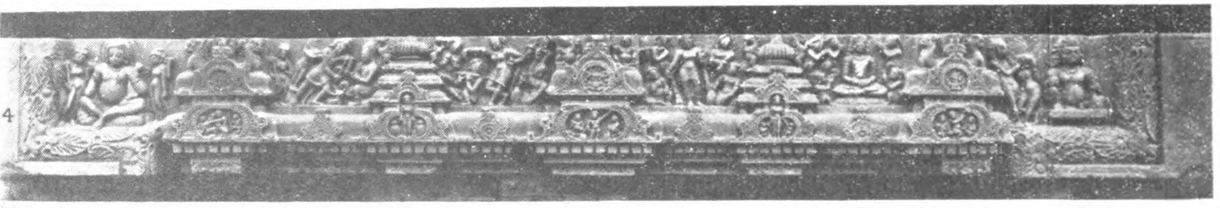
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2



3



4

1. Bas-relief illustraing incidents in Buddha's life and a Buddha statue in Bhumi-sparshamudra.
2. An Elephant in stone. 3. Rama-Lakhsmana Sculpture.
4. The Gupta Lintel of the Khantivadi Jataka.

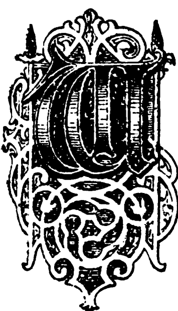
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Chapter VII

MYTHS AND ANNALS

"So passes silent o'er the dead, thy shade,
Brief time! and hour by hour, and day by day,
The pleasing pictures of the present fàde,
And like a summer vapour steal away."

—W. L. Bowles.



E must now return to our quarters at Benares and brace up our jaded limbs by taking a little rest, and as we do so we may indulge in short chats about the various stages in the life-history of this ancient city which, remarks Mark Twain in his own piquant style, "is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend, and looks twice as old as all of them put together."

Kashi Khandam

It is in the *Kashi Khandam*, a part of the *Skanda Puranam* [1] that we find what may properly be styled the mythology of Benares. In very ancient times, so the Purana proceeds to relate,—after the era of Swayambhava Manu, there

(1) Though it is hard to say anything definite as to the age of this Purana, it may be noted that the earliest known manuscripts, of the **Kashi Khandam** bear date Saka 930 (A. D. 1008), and a copy of thc **Skanda Puranam** dating from the seventh century was lately found in Nepal by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Hara Prasad Shastri.

was a dreadful drought extending over sixty years which drove men out of their homes and causec them to resort to the river-banks and to seek shelter in the hill caves, and reduced them to the extremity of sustaining themselves upon anima food. At last, apprehending the destruction o all life in the land, Brahmā thought of th great Raja Ripunjaya, a descendant of Manu—then engaged in *tapa* (austerities), at Kasi—as th only person who could avert the calamity by the strength of his righteousness and piety. H requested Ripunjaya to protect the people of Kas by becoming its Ruler, for it was a virtuous Kin alone upon whom the gods showered their bless ings in the shape of abundance and prosperity fo his people. He agreed, but on condition that whil he reigned, the gods, whom the beauty and sanctit of Kasi had attracted to live there, must leave and go to the upper regions of heaven. 'Be so,' said Brahmā, and Ripunjaya took up the rei of government under the assumed name of Divoda and his people became happy and blessed wi plenty. On the persuasion of Brahma, Siva we to live on the top of the Mandara mountai whither all the gods followed him.

Eighty thousand years thus passed and tl gods became impatient to return to Kasi whi they loved ardently, and their yearning for increased with the progress of time. Findin

however, no fault in the virtuous King to warrant his dislodgment, they took recourse to subterfuges and prevailed upon Agni (Fire) to leave his kingdom; but the King supplied the want of fire by his own supernatural powers. Siva and Parvati also now grew disconsolate for the holy city that lay 'floating like a lotus when the sky met the waters in the great cataclysm.' Their plighted word, however, to stay in heaven as long as Divodas reigned at Kasi, they found no means to withdraw.

So Siva first sent the sixty-four *Yoginees* (female demi-gods) in disguise to find out some failings of the King that should justify his expulsion from the city. This they could not do, and anxious to hide their faces in shame and enamoured moreover of the charms of the lovely Kasi, they continued to stay there, and each established an emblem of Siva for worship. Waiting in vain for a year for their return, Siva sent *Surya* (the Sun) in his chariot of seven swift-footed chargers—the seven elementary colour-rays of modern science (?)—only to court a similar failure. Next followed Brahmā, and in the shape of an old Brahman requested the King to provide materials for ten *Aswamedha* sacrifices—a seemingly impossible task, which however the King accomplished. Thus foiled, Brahmā also resolved not to return.

Siva then sent his unnumbered *Ganas*—his attendant demi-gods; but they also swelled the ranks of those that had preceded and added to the number of *lingams* there, each establishing one for worship and naming it after his own name with the addition of an '—*eswara*' (god) at the end of it. Last went Siva's beloved child *Ganesha*, the head of the Ganas, disguised as an old astrologer. He settled himself in diverse shapes in various places, and attained success by beguiling the people with illusions and throwing their minds out of balance by means of dreams which as astrologer he afterwards interpreted in his own way. The King sought his advice and was directed to abide by the words of a Brahman who would come from the north in eighteen days. This was Vishnu who had come and ensconced himself in various parts of the city under different guises. At his bidding, the King erected a temple and established an emblem of Siva there under the name of *Divodaseswara* (the *Iswara* or god of Divodas)—famed to be the one still existing above the present Mir Ghat. While engaged in worship, a bright chariot alighted from above one day and carried him off to heaven. And the gods returned and continued to be here as before.

———Here ends the mythical story, and thus is the existence accounted for of the numberless emblems of Siva and of the numerous images of

Ganesha and Vishnu, and of Durga, Annapurna and Parvati under these different denominations in various quarters of the city. It is mainly these gods of the Hindu pantheon that are by far the most often to be found represented here. The shrines of Rama, Sita, Hanuman and of Krishna—the only others to be met with here—though held in much veneration, seem to be of later times. In Anandagiri's *Sankaravijaya* dealing with the times of his master Sankaracharya who lived in the ninth century, there is no "allusion made to the separate worship of Krishna, either in his own person, or that of the infantile forms in which he is now so pre-eminently venerated in many parts of India, nor are the names of Rama and Sita, of Lakshmana or Hanuman once particularised, as enjoying distinct and specific adoration." [1] This should go to indicate that they had not yet come to be established here even in the ninth century A. D. It is principally the Siva emblems that occupy the whole of the Hindu portion of the city, and numbers of such emblems are being constantly added in modern times as well by pious old men coming to live here in their old age.

It may be interesting to note in this connection that some consider the legend of the mythical King

(1) H. H. Wilson's Religious Sects of the Hindus (Trubner 1861) p. 17.

Divodas to be an allegory of the occupation of Benares by the Buddhist rulers and its subsequent conversion to Brahmanic Hinduism again when the Hindu practices and observances were revived anew. The recital in the Kashi Khandam that Vishnu assumed the form of Buddha to delude the minds of the King and the people and cause their fall from Hinduism, tend also to indicate that the virtuous Divodas and his people discarded the gods and became Buddhists and continued to be so till converted into Brahmanic Hinduism again. This would go further to prove that this Purana cannot claim antiquity to any period anterior to that of Buddha.

An Allegory

"*Its history is to a great extent the history of India,*" remarks Mr. Sherring. From the earliest periods of the Aryan colonisation in Hindusthan, Benares was one of the first settlements to which probably those ancient people had been attracted by its pleasant site and the fertility of the soil as also by the security as well as the immunity from interference by the aborigines afforded by its isolated position between the two streams, the Barana and the Asi—which must have been of much wider proportions then.

The great antiquity of this place can be gathered from its being mentioned in the *Satapatha*

Brahmana of the *Sukla Yajurveda* and in the *Kausitaki Brahmanopanishada* as 'Kasi' the wide and holy land of '*Yajnas*' (sacrifices), as also in the great national epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Before the Aryan colonisation the Dravidians or the Kolarians originally inhabited the Gangetic valley and probably occupied this place too. The *Kasis* tribe of the Aryans came from Northern India in the later Vedic ages and ousted them and settled to the South of the Ganges at some time between 1400 and 1000 B. C. The *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads* were taken to have been compiled about this period, and Benares had then already begun to be famous 'as a great seat of Aryan philosophy and religion.' Ajatasatru, king of the Kasis, was a famous name of this period, as a great patron of learning.

Antiquity

The Kasis owed allegiance to the kings of Kosala (Modern Oudh) belonging to the Solar Race, and Benares was then a large province extending up to Prayag (modern Allahabad). King Puru and his father Yajati, 'Lord of all the Kasis,' mentioned in the Mahabharata had their capital at Pratisthana, the site of which was near modern Allahabad; even then Baranasi 'decked with beautiful gates and walls' had acquired prominence as a town of note and importance before it became the capital

The City of Kasi

of the province. In the first century A. D. Aswaghosha, the *Guru* (spiritual preceptor) of Raja Kanishka, describes it in his *Soundarananda Kabya* as a city enclosed by Barana and Asi ; and even so late as the fifth century after Christ, the Chinese traveller Fa Hian found the province and the city as extensive and prosperous as in the '*ancient*' times. The other Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Thsang who came here two centuries later observed that the kingdom covered 660 miles in circumference and its capital Baranasi lying near the Ganges extended over eighteen or nineteen *li* (above three miles) in length and from five to six *li* (about a mile) in breadth.

The Early Kings

According to the *Vishnu* and *Brahmanda Puranas*, *Raja Kash* of the line of King Aiyu belonging to the Lunar Race, was the first ruler of this kingdom ; and it was probably during the time of King Ketuman, fifth in descent from him, that the city of 'Baranasi' was established as the capital of the kingdom. There was, later on, a lengthy struggle for supremacy betwen this race and the *Haiheyas*, and Ketuman, who is also known by the name of Haryaswa, was slain by the Haiheyas. His grandson Divodas, however, fortified Benares, but he was defeated and expelled by the Haiheya King Durdama, who in his turn was overcome and turned out of Benares by

Divodas's son Pratardan. This latter re-established the kingdom of Kasi and is supposed to have been a contemporary of Rama the hero of the great Epic Ramayana. This line consisted of twenty-four kings among whom King Dhristaketu has been mentioned in the Bhagabadgeeta as having been present during the Kurukshetra war which took place between 1400 and 1300 B. C. Eight and twenty Kings of the *Haiheyas* followed this dynasty and were succeeded by five Kings of the *Pradyota* dynasty who reigned for about a century and a half.

Religion of the time

A word here about the religion of the time at Benares.——Long before the advent of Buddha, Jainism—founded, according to Coleman, by Rishabadeva,—had first been preached at Benares by SUPARSHA, the seventh of the four and twenty *Jaina Tirthankaras* (saints), who was born at Benares and who established and spread the Jaina religion here. PARSWANATH or PARESNATH, the twenty-third Tirthankara, was the son of Aswasena, King of Kasi, and he relinquished the world and became a preacher. The Bhelupura quarter of the city is of great sanctity to the Jainas as being the place where he was born. Jainism had gradually been spreading and taking root at Benares in his time and the influence of Hinduism

was to some extent on the wane. He passed away in B. C. 777; and it was two centuries later, when Buddha arrived at Benares and fixed upon Sarnath as the main centre from which his new faith was to spread, that the first onslaught upon orthodox Hinduism was really made in a manner that was felt. Immense numbers of proselytes from all parts of Kasi, Kosala and Magadha were attracted by the simplicity and beauty of his new doctrines as contrasted with the mystery and rigidity of the multifarious observances then prevailing. At the time of King Bimbasara (532-485 B. C.) of the Sisunaga dynasty of Magadha, Buddha came to his court at Rajgriha and was received with marked honor. This King's son Ajatasatru afterwards conquered Kosala and extended his Kingdom to the Northern India and shifted his capital from Rajgriha to Pataliputra (modern Patna).

King Jasha

King Jasha or *Jasoratha* who had succeeded after the downfall of the Pradyota Kings, was about this time the powerful monarch of Kasi. He attended the discourses of Buddha and became convert to the new religion along with his fifty-four royal companions and princes and all the members of the royal family, and his people also followed suit; and Benares, the holy land of *Yajnas*,—or rather the major portion

of it—was won over by the new religion and remained for nearly eight centuries under the sway of Buddhism. It was at this latter period that the Buddhist city gradually spread from the north of Benares all the way to Sarnath.

The Mauryans

In the fourth century before Christ, Benares along with the Kingdom of Kosala became subject to King Chandragupta, who ascended the throne ot Magadha in 320 B.C. and founded the *Mauryan* dynasty. It was during the reign of his grandson Asoka who embraced Buddhism and lived in the third century B. C. (260-222) that Buddhism rose to its zenith and fulness of glory, and Sarnath came to be enriched and beautified with numbers of Buddhist shrines and memorials. Buddhist missionaries were then despatched to various distant places in and out of India for spreading the religion, and among them was Asoka's son Mahindra who with his sister Sangamitra preached Buddhism in Ceylon. For a century and a half since the death of the great Master, accordiug to Kalhana's *Rajtarangini*, Budhism in its purest form held full away and then came the decline, and the high ideals of his doctrines came to be lost in popular superstitions which began to group around his personality and personal relics, and his statues and statuettes were set up in great abundance for worship. When Asoka's

grandson Dasaratha reigned, the Jainas also roused themselves to vigourous action and pressed on with their work. Thus between Buddhism and Jainism, the Brahmanic Hinduism at Benares at this period stood crippled as it were in the decrepitude of age and fell to its lowest ebb, and each one of them lost strength in the conflict and went below its normal standard.

The Sungas, Kanvas and Andhras

The Mauryan Kings held sway over Magadha and Northern India till B. C. 183 and Benares was subject to them; they were followed by the Hindu Kings of the *Sunga* and *Kanva* dynasties who ruled till B. C. 26, and during their reign Hinduism began to revive. The *Andhras* then conquered Magadha and ruled for four centuries and a half till 430 A. D. Then came the downfall of the Magadha empire, after which the *Gupta Kings of Kanouj* came to power and obtained mastery over Benares in the fifth century; and during their rule Benares regained its former splendour and Hinduism was to some extent resuscitated. King Baladitya Gupta made Benares his capital and strove hard to restore Hinduism to its former glory. He and his son enriched Benares with numbers of lofty temples and fine edifices, and the latter in the sixth century A. D. erected a large temple at Sarnath also for the

worship of Vishnu. Benares then became subject to the *Kings of Oujjein* all of whom except the great Vikramaditya were Buddhists.

Kings of Oujjein

In the first half of the seventh century Benares was in the hands of the great King Harshavardhana or Siladitya II. (610-650 A. D.), and it was at this period that Huien Thsang came to Kanouj and witnessed the great Buddhist festival which this King celebrated with great pomp and grandeur. He found Hindu princes attending the ceremony as guests and the followers of the two creeds living together in good followship.

Sankaracharya

All the three religions of the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas, had, however, grown weak in their struggles, and at this juncture arose the great *Sankaracharya* and with his advent in the eighth century after Christ[1]—followed an era of reformation and the revival of old Hinduism in right earnest. Bhattapada or Bhatta Kumaril, another great reformer, who had preceded and paved the way for him, had succeeded in drawing away many large provinces from Buddhism and converting them to Hinduism.

(1) In an article on Sankaracharya in the "Indian Antiquary", June 1882, the dates of his birth and death have been computed to be 788 aud 820 A. D. respectively based upon certain data contained in a Sanskrit work found at Belgaon.

The two met at Prayag (Allahabad) just before the former's death which occurred under extremely tragic circumstances, for Bhatta Kumaril destroyed himself upon the pyre by way of making a penance. Sankara came to Benares, the present populous portions of which were then full of patches of greenwood with *asrams* (retreats) of *Sannyasis* and sacrificial altars sheltered by *pippals* and *kadambas* occupying the sites where now stand hundreds of lofty mansions. The Buddhists had laid out their town at Sarrath, and Sankara also bent his steps thither, and resided for a time under the spreading branches of a banyan tree where his wonderful discourses attracted the great Padmapada and others who became his disciples.

Sankara's philosophical teaching adopting all Nature as but the manifestation of the Universal Soul, and his wonderful solution of the problems of the 'One in many' and 'Unity in variety' and his doctrine of Non-dualism (Advaitism) or 'the inseparability of the human nature from the Divine Essence' caused a great upheaval ; and the people returned to their old religion and the worship of Siva, and Benares regained its position as the citadel city of Hinduism, which in spite of various vicissitudes it has till now retained. Buddha himself was taken in as an incarnation of Vishnu and was then absorbed in Hinduism. The decline of Buddhism which had already commenced and its final overthrow in India now became inevitable.

Hiuen Thsang who found only thirty *Sangharams* or Buddhist monasteries inhabited by three thousand monks in the whole kingdom of Benares and a hundred temples of the Hindus with ten thousand devotees attached to them, must have been here during the decadence of the Buddhistic faith, as is evidenced by the absence of any mention of the existence of any sacred Buddhist edifices in the capital of the province at the time, while he noted that there were twenty *Deva* temples in the town of Benares the towers and the halls of which were of sculptured stone and carved wood.

Jashovarma of Kanouj

By the eighth century Jashovarma, King of Kanouj, held mastery over Benares aud made strenuous efforts towards the re-establishment of the Vedic Hinduism; and Benares became the centre of Brahmanism at the time. Then followed the *Dark Age of India* from the middle of the eighth to the tenth century A. D. whose history is shrouded in obscurity. Albêrüni, the Mahomedan scholar of Khiva who was a prisoner of Mahmud of Ghazni, writing about 1030 A. D., however, records having heard of the holy fame of Benares which he compares to Mecca of the Mahomedans and remarks that Hindu "anchorites wander to it and stay there for ever, as dwellers of the Ka'ba stay for ever at Mecca,"—thus proving that Benares had emerged unscathed

and had retained its prestige and position intact during those dark days.

Later on King Dharma Pal conquered Kanouj, and Kasi along with the Kingdom of Kanouj became subject to the *Pal Kings of Gour* in Bengal who were all Buddhists as has been proved by the inscriptions on the stone slab of King Mahipal of 1026 A. D., found at Sarnath. By the beginning of the eleventh century the Kingdom of Kanouj together with Benares fell into the hands of the *Garharwār Kings*, and this city attained great prosperity during their reign.

Pal Kings of Bengal

In 1019 and 1022 Benares was raided and sacked by Mahmud of Ghazni, who is said to have razed a thousand temples to the ground. He was followed by Ahmad Nialtigin in A. D. 1033 in this career of destruction; this, however, was only a raid, and towards the end of the twelfth century it fell into the hands of Mahammad Ghori's general Kutbuddin —who had also been credited with having demolished nearly a thousand Hindu temples,—after the defeat of Raja Jaichand Rathore (1194 A. D.) who held sway at Kanouj at the time. Benares was again rebuilt after such destruction and this process was undoubtedly repeated several times.

Mahomedan Raids

About 1300 A. D. Alauddin laid a thousand Hindu temples in the dust; and though they

multiplied again and even exceeded their former number,—for even in later times Emperor Jehangir designated Benares as 'the city of temples,'— this kind of vandalism was repeated again and again, and two names that acquired notoriety in this connection were those of Bårbak Shah (1493 A. D.) and Soleiman Karrani (1580), the generals of Sikandar Lodi and Daud. Not content with mere destruction the later Moslem conquerors went the length of erecting mosques upon the very sites of the temples they had destroyed. What remained of ancient Hindu architecture after the raids of the Khilji Kings were swept away during the Pathan rule and specially by the vindictive bigotry of Sikandar Lodi. There was a lull for a time during the sovereignty of the first Moghul emperors; and all through the tolerant reign of Akbar there were even renovation and restoration of Hindu structures. Emperor Akbar's reply to Jehangir's query, noted in his *Memoirs*, as to why he had prohibited all manner of interference with the building of temples by the Hindus, shows his principles of action and reveals the inner nature of the man in him: "I find myself a puissant monarch, the shadow of God upon earth. I have seen that He bestows the blessings of His gracious Providence upon all His creatures without distinction. Ill should I discharge the duties of my exalted station, were I to

Temple-breaking

withhold my compassion and indulgence from any of those entrusted to my charge. With all of the human race, with all of God's creatures, I am at peace. Why then should I permit myself, under any consideration, to be the cause of molestation or aggression to any one?" But his words of wisdom had but little effect and were entirely lost upon his son, to whose personal spite and animosity the commencement of fresh raids against the Hindu temples was evidently due.

Temple-breaking reached its acme in the seventeenth century when, it is said, Aurangzeb in his bigoted zeal began smashing shrines and altars and destroying numbers of Hindu temples, and in his arrogance gave the holy city the name of *Muhammadabad*—which, however, never proceeded beyond his official papers. How far Aurangzeb had been responsible for *all* the destruction laid at his door or whether they were the doings of his over-zealous followers and provincial deputies, is now open to question in view of the recent discovery of a *firman* of that emperor referring to the temples and Brahmans of Benares.[1] Be

(1) In course of my search after materials for this work I came across an old FIRMAN of Emperor Aurangzeb at Benares tending to show that he had prohibited all interference with the Brahmans of Benares who had been disturbed by some Mahomedans in the exercise of their religious rites,—a fact opposed to all accepted theories. I gave a detailed account of this find in my paper read at the

that as it may, though the Mahomedans converted Hindu stones into Mahomedam mosques and utilized the best of them for the purpose, and though Aurangzeb's name has been connected with the building of the highest musjid in Benares with the very tall towers—known as *Madhoji-ki-deora*—upon the ruins of the old temple of Beni Madho and the erection of another over the wrecks of the old Visweswara temple, still the Hindus shut their ears to the call of Islam and adhered staunchly to their old faith.

During the time of Emperor Babar most of the

meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 1st. March 1911 with a view to further researches being made in the matter by antiquarian experts—which is reproduced here in the Appendix with a translation of the Firman in question into English. I may also add that in course of an interesting conversation with an old Mahomedan gentleman of culture, I was told that it was a custom in former times to ascribe a mosque erected by any one in the kingdom to the reigning sovereign as a mark of honor to him although the latter might know nothing about it. From this he infers that the mosque near the Jnan Bapi or that over the Panchaganga or the Alamgiri Musjid in the interior was never erected by Aurangzeb or **any Mogul Emperor**, for they are so poor in architectural beauty and so small in dimensions that they would hardly bear any comparison with those admittedly erected by the Mogul Emperors at Agra, Delhi and other cities of India. I give the firman in question and this opinion as they are for the scrutiny of the scholars. I have, however, chosen to retain the popular denomination of the mosques attributed to Aurangzeb for their indentification.

places now occupied by stately temples and palaces were covered with jungles. It was about 1570 that Benares began to regain its ancient splendour during the regime of a Rajput chief, Raja Soorjan of Boondee, who was entrusted by Akbar with the government of Benares. According to the *Ayeen-i-Akbari*, Benares in Akbar's time formed a separate province under the Subah of Allahabad. By the end of the seventeenth century it was a distinct Raj although subject to the Subadar of Oudh. About 1722 A. D. it came to the hands of Saadat Khan, the first Nawab of Oudh after the disintegration of the Moghul Empire; and it was at last ceded by the Nawab to the British in 1775. The rest of the history of this city is intimately connected with the house of the present Maharaja of Benares to be resumed later on.[1]

The Moguls

Later History

For six long centuries now had the Mahomedans held the city; since its cession, however, it had a quiet uneventful career with only one exceptional occasion—that of the great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, when there was, as in other parts of India, some disturbance at Benares as well, on the fourth day of June. Three regiments consisting of two thousand sepoys rose in arms; but the trouble soon subsided after some bloodshed following the parallel

(1) See Chap. X, post.

in the rest of Northern India.

Reverenced as ever and held in the highest sanctity throughout the whole of Hindu India, Benares has since continued to enjoy peace and prosperity and to be enriched with magnificent temples, noble edifices and stately *Ghats* built by the *reises* and Rajas and Maharajas of all parts of this vast peninsula. Indeed there is hardly an Indian prince of any consequence who has not a residence of his own and a *Chhatra* or *Dharmasala* here as a permanently endowed institution for feeding the poor with large properties set apart for the purpose; for, this pre-eminently is the *Puri* or city of Annapurna, the goddess of plenty, the supplier of all world's food, where none must go starving! And even in the deep hours of night pious people are met with going along the river-bank with loads of eatables in search of the hungry poor who might need them, and calling out '*Koi bhuka hai?*'—Is there any one hungry?



PART SECOND

Chapter VIII

THE SHRINES AND TEMPLES

"I see him in the blazing sun
And in the thunder-cloud,
I hear him in the mighty roar
That rusheth through the forest hoar
When winds are raging loud.

I feel him in the silent dews,
By grateful earth betray'd;
I feel him in the gentle showers,
The soft south wind, the breath of flowers,
The sunshine and the shade."



N impression that Benares is essentially a city of temples large and small and gardens wide and extensive, is what you must have up to time been led to form. But in the portion of the city we are now about to visit—the purely Hindu one of shrines and sacred spots that make the holy Benares what it is,—it is only temples and temples and the emblems of Siva scattered about here, there and everywhere. Nay, family temples abut even into portions of

residential houses, and small niches on the walls hold Siva,—leading thus to the natural inference that the predominant deity in Benares is Siva under this symbolic form.

Siva-worship

This form of worship, however, has not been confined solely to the East, for, it prevailed widely in the ancient times in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon where emblems similar to the Indian symbol have been found in abundance. Osiris, who resembled the Indian Siva in many respects, was also worshipped under this form, and the city of Memphis was exclusively sacred to him as Benares is to Siva. The Romans also observed this form of worship, and the Greeks worshipped Bacchus under this symbol and set up numbers of such emblems in many of the streets of their cities ; it is also said that they used to carry a golden emblem sixty yards in height in some of their festive processions.[1] In different parts of the Western Hemisphere also, in Mexico, Peru, Yucatan and Central America, many monolithic representations of the *Lingam* have been found, and according to the testimony of a companion of Fernando Cortez, there was a large emblem in the temple at Panuco[2].

(1) A. K. Datta's "Bharatbarshiya Upasak Sampradaya," Pp. 145, 148.

(2) K. N. Bose's "Hindu Civilization in Ancient America" P. 10.

In India, the worship of Siva became current from the very earliest of times; and though this emblem has no place among the types of the mythos of the Vedas, mention has been made of Siva therein under the denomination *Rudra.* The Vedas, according to Max Muller, belong approximately to 2000 B. C., while others ascribe them to 6000 B. C. The renowned scholar Bal Gangadhar Tilak, however, in his *Arctic Home of the Aryans*, assigns the composition of the Vedas to much earlier ages and places it in the times when the Aryans were in the Arctic regions, his theory being based upon some astronomical data connected with the sunrise and the recurrence of the seasons described in certain verses of the Rig-Veda. In those early times, however, Siva appears in the Vedas under the appellation of Rudra, the father of the storm-god Maruta; and thus the worship of Siva seems to be almost as old as Hinduism itself. Later on in the sixth or seventh century B. C. two kings of Kashmir named Asoka and Jaloka were, according to the *Raj Tarangini*, worshippers of Siva. Image-worship in temples, however, was not in vogue in those early ages, and it was through the medium of the sacrificial fire—into which offerings made to the Vedic deities were cast—that they were invoked and worshipped. It was after the advent of Buddha in the fifth century B. C., or rather, after the degeneration of

his creed into the worship of his person and his personal relics later on that image-worship of gods and goddesses began in imitation of the Buddhists and gradually supplanted the Vedic sacrifices *(Yajnas)* at the household fire-side[1].

That Siva was worshipped in his *full-bodied image* is amply testified by the existence of his images cut in stone and by the glowing descriptions given of him in the Puranas; and even now the practice has not grown quite obsolete. Hiuen Thsang in his accounts mentions having seen a statue of *Maheswara Deva* in Benares a hundred feet high 'grave and majestic, filling the spectator with awe and seeming as it were indeed alive'— which must afterwards have been destroyed by the followers of Mahammad Ghori. The representation, however, under the symbolic form seems to have been noticed so far back as the fourth century B. C. by Megasthenes when he stayed at the court of Chandragupta at Pataliputra.

Worship under the impersonal symbol of the phallus as connoting the first principle of animation attributes to Siva the function of *creation*, though he is represented as the *Destroyer* or the dissolving power in the Hindu Triad. This inconsistency is usually sought to be explained away by saying that according to the Hindu belief in the doctrine

(1) R. C. Dutt's History of Civilisation in Ancient India P. 648.

of repeated births and transmigrations, death or destruction is but the opening of the portals of a renewed existence. But the history of the origin of this form of worship though shrouded in mystery seems to point to an interpretation very different from what has been generally accepted and suggests that the symbol far from having *originally* been, as is now supposed, a representation of the phallus was in reality that of *a column of resplendent flames* sanctified by being the abode of Siva for a time. Prof. Wilson in his *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of the Hindus* remarks: 'It is not interwoven with their amusements, nor must it be imagined that it offers any stimulus to impure passions. The emblem—a plain column of stone, or sometimes, a cone of plastic mud suggests no offensive ideas.' In his preface to the *Vishnu Purana* also he notes that 'there is nothing like the phallic orgies of antiquity' even in the Linga Purana, and that 'it is all mystical and spiritual.' It may be worth while to trace its mythical origin and to attempt to draw out the original conception from among the tangled masses of all manner of stuff stocked together in the *Puranas* which profess to narrate what had taken place ages before their compilation.

When this visible world had not yet been ushered into existence, there was even then the all-pervading Radiance (*Tejas*) that was *Brahman*

whose nature was Truth, Wisdom and Eternity. In Him arose a Desire (for creation) that took shape and came to be known as *Prakriti* or *Maya* (illusion) ; and from the same source from which Prakriti came, originated *Purusha* or *Narayana* (Vishnu). This was the very first act in the great drama of creation—the first manifestation of the *Nirguna* or neuter and unconditioned *Brahman* passing into a conditioned state. Then came Brahmā into being from out of a lotus springing from the navel of Vishnu as he reclined upon the body of the serpent Ananta (the endless, the symbol of Eternity) and floated asleep upon the billowy surface of the vast chaotic deep. Later on Brahmā and Vishnu confronted each other, and there were heated disputations between them, each claiming to be the source of the other's origin and to be the sole lord of creation. In order to put an end to their quarrels 'there arose before them a resplendent Sign (*Lingam*) [1] of light composed of thousands of burning flames like unto the conflagrations of all-destroying time. Increase or decay it had none, nor beginning, nor middle, nor end ; it was without a parallel, unascertainable, undivulged and

What the Puranas say

(1) Sign, token, emblem, anything which distinguishes or defines.—Sir Monier Williams.

the root-cause of the Universe.' [1] Dismayed at this incomprehensible manifestation, they attempted to find out what this great pile of flame was, but failed. Then, there formed up before them a mighty figure of manifold beauty with five faces and ten arms and of the delicate hue of camphor. Him they came to realise as *Maheswara* [2], the Creator of the Universe. And as they bent before him and chanted hymns in his praise, 'the Stainless one (*Niranjana*) [3] was pleased, and in the form of Sound Divine (*Logos ?*) immerged into that same *Sign* and stayed there smiling [4].' Brahma and Vishnu humbled themselves before Him, and He explained to them that it was from out of *Him* alone that they had both sprung into being. He then assigned to Brahma and Vishnu the duties of the creation and the continuation of the universe, reserving to himself the function of

(1) "ज्योतिर्लिङ्गं तदोत्पन्नमावयोर्मध्य अद्भुतम् ।
ज्वालामालासहस्राढ्यं कालानलचयोपमम् ॥ १३
क्षयवृद्धिविनिर्मुक्तमादिमध्यान्तवर्जितम् ।
अनौपम्यमनिर्दिष्टमव्यक्तं विश्वसम्भवम् ॥ १४
शिवपुराणम्- ज्ञान संहितायां २य अध्यायः ।

(2) An appellation of Siva.

(3) Lit, the stainless ; also, an appellation of Siva.

(4) आवयोः स्तुतिभिस्तुष्टो लिङ्गं तस्मिन् निरञ्जनः ।
दिव्यं शब्दमयं रूपमास्थाय प्रहसन् स्थितः ॥
शिवपुराणम्- ज्ञान संहितायां २य अध्यायः ।

laya or making all things merge into their perennial source. [1]

——Such is the account furnished by the Puranas in their chapters on cosmogony regarding the conception of Siva as the very *first agent* of the unconditioned Brahman in the work of creation—his function as such ceasing with the relegation of the task of continuing this work to Brahmā. Accepted thus to be *the Creator par excellence* the cylindrical column of uprising flames of fire wherein he had rested after he became manifest came to be symbolised to represent him—even as the sacred Cross upon which the Messiah had last rested while passing away came to symbolise his creed. A class of Sivaite ascetics, the Jangams, carry this emblen pendent from their necks as a section of the followers of Christ carry small representations of the Cross in wood or stone or metal upon their persons in the very same way.

The original conception of the symbol would thus appear to be very different from its modern significance. Besides representing the column of flames, the Sign of Siva has also been described as *madhya-vrittam*—which makes it of a round or spheroidal shape—covered all over with fiery

(1) Vide Siva Puranam—Jnana Samhita, Chs. II and III; Linga Puranam—Purva Bhaga, Chs. XVIII and XIX; and also, Brahmanda Puranam, Chs LIX.

radiance.[1] The word *lingam* itself had thus no technical meaning exclusively attached to it, but signified merely a *sign* or *emblem.* By association of ideas the symbolic representation of Siva *as the first Creator* came to be connected with the *function* of creation. Hence, when the unmaterial column of uprising flame was later on materialised by its representation in jewels, stone or earth, it *came to be viewed* as a representation of the phallus as the animating principle in its *grosser earthly aspect,* and the agency of the Divine *Will* as the root-cause of creation was thus entirely lost sight of and forgotten. And as all things corporeal must have supports to rest upon, an addition of a *Vedi* or pedestal was made to it; and—by further development of the coarse idea—this appurtenance came to be regarded as representing the goddess Gauri. The fact that the *Mahanirvana Tantram* keeps the two portions of the symbol altogether distinct[2] lends support to the view that the latter was merely a later addition. Thus what is now taken, no doubt, as phallic emblem was in origin only a representation of a column of flames and one of the purest conceptions of the Hindu mythology. *Honi*

(1) "प्रभूतं मध्यतस्तत्र जले लिङ्गमदृश्यत ।
ज्वालामालाभिर्भिन्नांशं सर्व्वभूतभयङ्करम् ॥"
शिवपुराणम्—सनत्कुमार संहितायां १४श अध्यायः

(2) XIV Ullasa, 24, 43 76,

soit qui mal y pense is, therefore, all that can be said of its being viewed in any other light. So, an enquiry into its origin before we start on our pilgrimage in this City of Siva has not perhaps been altogether profitless.

We may now dive into the interior, the mazes of narrow lanes and by-lanes in which will be observed to be a striking feature in this quarter.

Benares Lanes

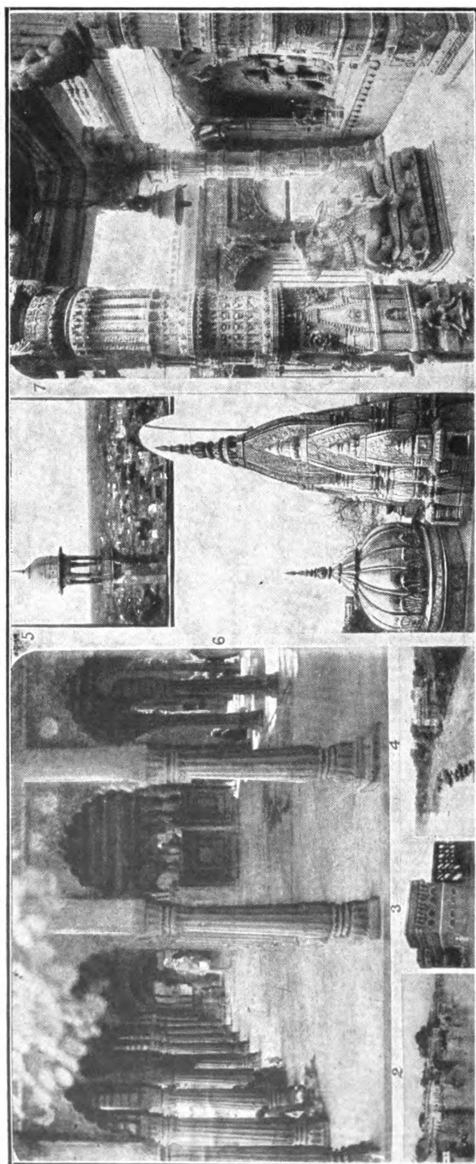
There is no question of levels here,—it is all ups and downs! A short distance forward as you advance half a dozen or more of broad stony steps come to view along the stairs-like stone-paved path which you must ascend; continue on your way, and perhaps there would soon be some fresh ones to descend, followed by some more leading you higher up; and thus it is all the way on,—especially in the eastern quarter towards the river-bank; and not infrequently would you be taken aback on being confronted by the remnants of the old *muhulla* (ward) gates at the head of such lanes in the shape of narrow openings with door-frames attached to them, and apprehend that you are being led into the premises of the private owners of some great mansion close by. In former times, there stood real doors in those frames, which used to be kept closed at night to no little discomfort and inconvenience of certain classes of the night-roving gentry. With superior provisions for the safety and security of life and

property now, the practice has of late been discontinued, and the doors have disappeared. Often hardly wide enough for more than a couple of human beings to walk abreast—not to speak of an elephant or a camel of decent proportions—you find such an alley often blocked by huge peregrinating bulls swaying from side to side in uncertain drunken gait, for which you must make way by standing aside. Emancipated from human slavery by their masters' acts of piety and turned adrift, they are now ownerless and roam *feræ naturæ*, and have quite a pleasant time of it—though often calling forth unpleasant ejaculations far from being pious from the profane lips of the keepers of road-side stalls of edibles which they freely patronise. The houses along these narrow lanes, generally three to five stories high (Plate XI, 5) with only patches of the blue heavens peering overhead, cause the lanes to look narrower and make a stranger feel a sense of oppressive closeness. They impart, however, a picturesque aspect to these winding lanes, and one might fancy himself roving in an old town of Spain or Southern Italy, thinks Mr. Havell, were it not for the surroundings of the temples and the people.

Perhaps this should suffice for a short sketch of the general outlook ; and if your weariness is off and your energy renovated by a night's sound sleep, we may by your leave start on our rambles

to have a look at the sacred shrines and temples —which, according to Sir William Hunter numbered 1454 besides smaller ones, to 272 mosques of the Mahomedans in 1885. It is said Raja Man Singh of Jaipur, true to a vow he had taken, presented Benares with a lakh of temples all built in a single night,—these ranging from the larger ones to the very diminutive models in stone you often meet with everywhere lying upon the ground, to make up the number.

The Temples



1. Jnan Bapi Temple. 2. Dandi Ghat. 3. Entrance, Dufferin Bridge. 4. A cosy corner, Rajghat. 5. A bit of Benares from one of the Beni-Madho towers. 6. The golden dome and spire of Visweswara temple. 7. Open porch of a temple near Visweswar's temple.

(1)

On The East





O start with then, we shall first direct our steps towards the DASASWAMEDH GHAT (Plate IV, I).

Dasaswamedh Ghat

The soft reddish glow on the murky east is diffusing itself into the dark blue above following the track as it were of the pioneering Twilight, that like a gleesome virgin had started in advance warbling in the voice of the early cuckoo

'I come in the breath of the waken'd breeze
I kiss the flowers. and I bend the trees;
And I shake the dew, which had fallen by night
From its throne, on the lily's pure bosom of white.'

The solemn hush that had preceded the approaching dawn seems now to be breaking into a soft murmur, and light footsteps are heard tripping down the stone-paved stairs to the accompaniment of the humming chants of sacred hymns. Up betimes even before the waking day the pious and the devout few have come from afar for their early morning ablutions. Reverently they approach

the holy stream, and preparatory to descending into it bend down and touch the water with the finger-tips and sprinkle a few drops upon their heads—for the feet must not come in contact with the holy water first.

The great orb of fiery red has now half risen above the sky-line defined against the green tree-tops beyond the spreading sands. With gentle caresses does it roll aside the white flimsy veil of mist which half conceals the blushing looks of the lovely Ganges gliding like a maiden coy in her onward course. Presently across the rippling expanse of her ample bosom a stately column of glowing crimson lies recumbent—in fruitless tremulous attempt, as it were, to bar her passage. Thus would fond Love ever strive to hold Life in close embrace and arrest her wonted course! But tide, like time, ever follows her destined course and would tarry for none—realising which, perhaps, the shining pile thins away in despair, the fiery orb begins to recede and ascends higher and higher; and the freed stream proceeds untrammelled in her glistening route. A mild perfume of agreeable incense floating in the air now diverts your attention and regales your senses; and soft and sweet falls the delicious *nahabat* music upon your ears borne on the wind from some temples close by, interrupted by occasional tinkling of bells and clanging of gongs,—a grand and solemn welcome to the

coming day and announcement of early invocation to the gracious gods.

Upon the spacious terrace of the lofty temple standing prominent on the north of the ghat, the cool morning breeze redolent with the odour of sanctity just grazes by and gently fans your cheeks. In the brightening light the long bridge from Rajghat spanning the river looks clear and distinct on the left, and towers and turrets come out to view in a ruddy hue blended with radiant white; and to the right, the crescent bank studded with temples and palaces on mighty foundations of massive stone stretches out towards the south till they merge away in the morning haze. A scene of unique grandeur full-bathed in the glamour of the day's opening eye unfolds before your wondering vision: the tall turrets and gold-tipped spires of unnumbered temples, the lofty walls and lovely balconies of stately palaces, the broad stone-paved stairs running along the numerous ghats—all lining the great arc of the ancient bank in a medley of variegated colours!

The day is now full awake and the Dasaswamedh Ghat—hallowed by its association with the great god Brahma's Ten-horse Sacrifice—seems now to wear its every-day garb, crowded with thronging bathers from far and near. Old men and young are pouring in to take their accustomed dip in the holy water, and matrons and young women and little

ones too in their robes of varied hues—the bright red and green and yellow of the Southerners mixing with the paler shades of the north-west and the pure white of Bengal. Ablutions and morning prayers over, and purified in body and feeling a sense of sanctification suffusing their frames, they would, most of them, now go on their *jattras* or daily rounds of visit to the holy shrines. Some over the edge of the water there linger awhile and sit in their wet clothes immersed in devotion ; and an interesting group of fresh-bathed elderly up-country dames sit yonder in a circle and chant hymns in soft mutters and throw flowers and pinches of rice into a flat brass dish lying in the middle.

To the Golden Temple

We shall now leave this sacred ghat, the most frequented and one of the holiest here, and follow a batch of bathers to the *Golden Temple of Visweswara*, the presiding deity and the premier god of all Benares. Up the steps as you proceed towards the highway, flower-stalls prominent with their wealth of golden marigold and barbers' shops with their sundries ranged before them appear on the right and left, as do also the platforms of the *ghatia* Brahmans squatting under huge palm-leaf umbrellas here and there inviting the patronage of customers. A little further on, and the lame, the blind, the leper and the decrepit line the path in

company with numbers of old wrinkled women and beggars, all seated with small pieces of cloth spread out in front of them, into which the pious—the women-folk mostly—throw in pinches of rice or pulse and sometimes a few cowries or pieces of copper as they trace their way back after their morning bath.

Emerging into the broad road and wending northward, we leave the *Fish-and-vegetable Market* on the right, and arrive at the entrance to the narrow lane leading to the Golden Temple flanked on either side with tempting sweets-shops bright with their white and brown wares. An interesting couple of small ill-clad urchins here stand hand in hand a little way aside, and their lips water with anticipations of untasted pleasure and longing as they watch the customers handling the dream objects of their paradise. Brahmans now and much too many of them accost you here volunteering to conduct you to the holy shrine — with sly expectations of being recompensed for their troubles at the end. Glittering brass and aluminium and German silver wares and cheap German imitations of Indian paintings meet your eyes on either side as you proceed up the lane.

Soon on the right in a small ill-lighted chamber appears the white marble statue of *Sankaracharya*, partly mutilated, and further on *Kotilingeswara Siva*

in an unassuming niche by the road-side. On the left, as you proceed, lies the temple of SAKSHI VINAYAK GANESHA containing a large red image of Ganesha in a spacious quadrangle to which the pilgrims resort after visiting the other shrines in order that this god may bear witness to the fact of their having performed the pilgrimage.

In fact this lane and the next by-lane to the right that curves towards the east from it, contain sacred shrines too numerous to mention. Just at the entrance to this latter stands the red image of *Dhundhiraj Ganesha* on the left and some flower-stalls on the right, and the rush of pilgrims from all India is thick at this narrow opening. The stone-paved pathway as you dive into it is moist with mud and water from the bare feet of thousands of worshippers passing this way, the majority of them with votive offerings of flowers, *bael* leaves and water-pots in their hands filled from the holy stream. Shops bright with miniature brass statuettes of gods and goddesses and stone and crystal emblems of Siva and sundry other appurtenances of worship, line this by-lane till you arrive near the famous temple of ANNAPURNA.

The stately temple has a fine and very elaborately worked tower and a dome supported upon carved and ornamented pillars. Admitted through the main entrance with a pair of large brass doors with highly finished repousse work upon them, the

floor of the open hall beneath the dome is found to be a piece of beautiful mosaic in white and black marble

Annapurna

It was about the beginning of the eighteenth century that this temple was erected by the Raja of Poona [1] and was later on greatly embellished by the famous Rani Bhawani of Nattore in Bengal. The golden face only of the goddess is visible from out of the profusion of garlands of marigold covering the whole body. This in sanctity is next only to Visweswara; and tradition runs that Siva had once been going a-begging all over the three worlds but could find no food anywhere, till at the advice of Laksmi he came to this place where his spouse Annapurna had spirited away all the provisions of the universe. Here he was sumptuously fed by the latter, and was so gratified and so much elated with joy that he installed the image of Annapurna at Kasi and founded the city in her honor and for her worship. This episode is graphically depicted in the *Yogāsram* Temple founded by the late Krishnananda Swami at Hous-Kattra in front of the Dasaswamedh Thana (Police Station), where a picturesque golden image of Annapurna is represented feeding Siva who stands in front with a bowl in hand—one of the very few full-bodied images of Siva to be

(1) According to Raja Jai Narain Ghoshal, it was erected by a Marhatta named Vishnu Mahadeo.

met with in Benares. In the Annapurna temple are also to be seen images of *Radha Krishna*, *Ganesha*, *Hanuman* the monkey-god, and the striking figure of *Surya-graha* (the sun-god) upon his seven-horse chariot. Numbers of beggars daily line the road outside the temple and obtain alms as a regular institution.

Proceeding onward, your eyes light upon the silver-face of the bodiless *Sani-deva* (Saturn) on the right with garlands of marigold hanging below it. But soft, for, quite blocking the narrow lane there advances a light red and white *purdah* enclosure held on by half a dozen or more of liveried servants shining in scarlet and yellow. It is some *Rani* or princess on a visit to the shrines and bent on worship who has thus been effectually shut out from the vulgar gaze of strangers and aliens. Slow it moves, this lightsome fabric—and lesser folks must wait till she walks away after finishing her devotions.

The Golden Temple

So, after a brief haltage, you now approach the far-famed GOLDEN TEMPLE lying to the left dedicated to VISWESWARA, the Holy of the Holies and the highest in sanctity in all Benares. The temple proper would not be visible until you pass through the gate and come to the quadrangle where it stands with a golden dome between two tall towering spires each fifty-one feet high; and

the floor below is inlaid with black and white marble—some of them covered with the names of their pious donors. The spire to the right with a golden trident surmounting it and a golden streamer by its side is also shining like burnished gold (Plate X, 6); the other spire to the left of the golden dome is of red sandstone. The dome and the spires are all richly carved with various designs of flowers and foliage and images of gods and goddesses executed in the old Hindu style. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, was said to have been so impressed by the holiness of the city that he covered the spire and the dome of this temple with plated gold—some say, thickly gilt copper—that dazzles the eye of the visitor to this day.

Ahalya Bai

The temple itself is said to have been built by the Marhatta prince Peshwa Baji Rao about 1721 and later on enlarged and beautified at great costs by that pious Royal Princess, the great *Ahalya Bai*, who ruled at Indore from 1766 to 1795 and to whose munificence Benares owes the magnificent ghat which bears her name and some fine temples as well. In other parts of India, too—notably in Mysore, Malwa, Rameswaram, Kedarnath, Gaya and Puri—are to be found numbers of temples, *Dharmashalas*, wells, roads and other works of public utility which immortalise the memory of this pious

lady, the Vishnupada temple at Gaya among these being the greatest and the grandest of them all. The present temple of Visweswara is only a poor substitute for the the original one that was destroyed by the Mahomedans to make room for their mosque; the former was more spacious and commodious as would appear from the stately ruins we shall presently see in its old site close by (Plate V,2). Mr. Neville writes that "the original temple, it would seem, was built on the high ground occupied by the Carmichael Library, and is believed to have been destroyed by Shahabuddin Ghori in 1194. A second temple was erected soon after between the Library and the present structure: and this was destroyed by Aurangzeb, who built a mosque out of the materials, the walls displaying a large amount of old Hindu carving."

Visweswara

Under the golden spire on the right inside the highly carved silver door-way is the famous emblem in black marble—a plain lingam ef uncarved stone—of the great god VISWESWARA, the founder of the holy city, in the low cistern-like seat on the floor railed round in silver and filled with water and offerings of flowers and garlands and *bael* leaves. Under the western spire are the emblems *Dandapaniswara* and *Swayambhu* and images of some other gods in the niches of the

apartment. In the open hall in the middle under the golden dome is another white marble emblem known as *Vaikunteswara Siva.* Four large bells—the largest one on the north side a gift of the Raja of Nepal—hang from the ceiling above. On all sides of the quadrangle are open verandahs filled with emblems and images,—the most important among which, located in the four corners, are *Abimukteswara Siva*, *Annapurna*, *Parvati* in an attitude of prayer, and *Laksmi Narain* ;—and even the courtyard below locate numbers of emblems, *Sanischareswara* being one of them.

Passing out by a side-door on the north-east corner, numbers of stone emblems whole and mutilated are observed lying strewn about in utter disorder by the back-wall of the building ; these probably belonged to the old Visweswara temple that was destroyed. A little further off on the left is a small house locating a large emblem known as *Dharmeswara Siva* with a very large number of smaller ones arranged in orderly rows constituting what is known as the *Deva-Sava* or Siva's court. In this connection mention may be made of one other very sacred spot, nay, one of the very highest sanctity, known as the *Antargriha* (the inner home) lying within the limits of the four shrines at four corners—of Manikarnikeswara on the east, Brahmeswara on the south, Gokarna on the west, and Bharbhuteswara on the north.

From the early dawn till the very depth of night the temple of Visweswara is filled with priests and devout worshippers from all parts of India chanting the praises of Siva or merely uttering the invocation, 'Hara, Hara', 'Bom, Bom'. The rush in front of the door of Visweswara's apartment is extremely great and an eager crowd press and jostle to get in and just have a glance at the deity. The dim room where a light is ever burning is rendered dimmer by the crowd flocking at the door and is resounding with the chants of *mantras* as the worshippers bathe the god with the holy water and present their offerings. This duty over, they visit and pay their homage to the other gods and goddesses located in the temple and make substantial presents in small coins to the priests sitting in front of them not forgetting the beggars as well, and take last of all a few rounds about the temple, pass out by the side-door, and proceed to the other shrines.

The Arati

The *Arati*—the evening invocation of Visweswara—is a sight to see. The brightly illuminated chamber is filled with the fragrance of burning incense, and heaps of sweet scented flowers and garlands almost shut out the large emblem from view; and as a dozen Brahmans with the five-rayed lights (*Pancha-pradipa*) in their right hands and tinkling bells in their left wave them in unison with the

solemn Vedic chants and keep on calling '*Sambho*', '*Sambho*' (an epithet of Siva), the effect is simply sublime, to say nothing of its being exceedingly impressive ; and it is hard for one to avoid being touched by the pervading religious fervour and not to feel a sense of isolation from the surroundings and the visible leading to the thought of an invisible Presence beyond.

Hindu Ideas

Whatever Hinduism is to casual observers, to those who seriously study it as it is in the abstract and as shorn of the grotesqueness that time has undoubtedly attached to some of its rituals and a portion of its exterior, it is a religion embodying a profusion of allegorical representations of the principles manifest in the Universe leading to the contemplation of the one Supreme Essence, the root and cause of all,——a religion pre-eminently fitting all stages of life and all degrees of advancement, ranging from the primitive simplicity—which can have no grasp of the abstract and for which the attributes of the Infinite have to be materialised within the circumscribed limits of visible forms and shapes,—and rising to the highest culture of the mind indulging in introspective vision and dealing with the primal Essence, as in the case of the great *Yogees* whose perception ranges in the Beyond and to whom the visible is but an unreality and an illusion.

In the dim beginning of the life-history of Man, the Child in Nature finds the hideous gloom of the night dispelled by the glorious sun-rise that makes the Earth manifest to sight, and hears the roaring thunder in the rolling clouds that melt in welcome showers to cool the parched earth. He watches the endless blue of the mighty ocean surging mysteriously in immense billows and the rushing gale lashing the waves into masses of ebullient foam. He feels the sweet breath of the Zephyr bracing his frame and gladdening his heart, and observes how the recurring seasons bring forth fresh bloom to adorn the earth. In awe and wonder he stoops to adore and pours forth a pæan of praise,—and up arise in his vision the glorious configurations of *Savitā*, *Indra*, *Marut*, *Varuna*, and the other deities to bless and console and allay the agitations of his mind. As nature's phenomena grow familiar by repititions and orderly successions, agencies regulating them come to be looked for; the mind begins to think, and—speaking in broad generalisations,— the circle is narrowed, and the mighty Trinity, *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Siva* stand out pre-eminent above all, as the essential energies of origination, preservation and transmutation of all kinds. By a process of abstraction, as the mind grows maturer, the One above the Three, self-contained and comprehending them all, the Supreme Cause—BRAHMAN,— void of shape or form, beyond conception and comprehension glows out

and shines forth above all the rest as the Creator as well as the subsistent Essence of all—the all-pervading Universal Soul wherein all things animate and inanimate hold their being as parts of the Universal Whole. The mysterious voice of nature—the booming '*O-m*'—suffusing the universe, then sounds in his mental ear as the Mother of all Knowledge, uplifting him above the material world and holding out before his mind's eye the glory of the Light Divine—even of "Him who," as *the Vedas* proclaim, "exists by Himself, whom the spirit alone can perceive, who is imperceptible to the organs of sense, who is without visible parts, eternal, the soul of all beings, and whom none can comprehend." This, perhaps, is the conception of the highest form of the living Hinduism, where the much-dreaded *idol* does not intervene.

All races and nations living under the sun are struck by the phenomena of Nature in the primitive ages in the self-same way or with but slight variations. As the expanding wisdom of the parent race is transmitted as a precious heritage to the succeeding generations of communities as well as nations, notions thus imbibed and ideas based upon the knowledge of their fathers usurp and fasten upon their mind and are sometimes even improved upon; and the wonders of Nature gradually lose their former glamour in their eyes and the manifestations of

Nature's God as symbolised by their fathers lose all their poetry and charm. The later conceptions of Zeus, Neptune, Hyperion and the rest of the gods of the Western pantheon—standing out in most cases as but brothers twin to their Eastern prototypes,—and their subsequent disappearance with the development of philosophical theology leading to the contemplation of the Supreme Essence, may serve as instances in point. Coming to modern times, it is the Hindus only who present the spectacle of the conservation of all the various stages of the development of their ideas of the Divinity as being adapted to the capacity and comprehension of the different grades of intellects of their masses,—while others have discarded all that was old and have striven to stick fast to the later growths alone, holding out the self-same ideal before all irrespective of the question of their capacity to grasp it. Thus it is that with the Hindus religion has still been a matter of the heart and not of the head alone, and not a mere convention and leisure-hour observance but a part of life itself, to the man of the highest culture in the same way as to one of the weakest intellect.

A Hindu who has not attained the requisite training for directing his thoughts to the conception of the Absolute, localises his contemplation in visible symbols or material emblems,—much as the veriest tyro falls upon his *Alpha* and *Beta* to

enable him to grapple with the highest flights of scientific formulæ; his mind, however, travels beyond them and ranges higher above. But *no Hindu* ever believes that this symbol or emblem or image, be it earth, stone, or wood, is ever the *God* he worships though he invests it with the *Spirit Divine* by a particular process of invocation (*Pranpratishtha*).[1] All the same, however, he comes eventually to acquire the same kind of love and veneration towards these aids to his devotions as the Christian has for his Cross or the stone image of the Immaculate Virgin or his revealed Scripture or the Buddhist for his statuette of the Enlightened One, or the Jaina for his *Arhat*, or the Mahomedan for his

1) It may not be out of place to quote here what the Rev. E. R. Hull remarks in his lecture on "HINDUISM" "As regards the use of idols or images, it is well to be on our guard against the somewhat naive idea of 'stock-and-stone worship' prevalent among many, viz., the notion that image-worshippers really worship material objects, viewing them at the same time simply as such . . . Where concrete object is directly made an object of adoration, that is always because it is viewed not merely as the material thing which it appears but because it is invisibly permeated or animated by the presence of spirit, of which it is merely the dwelling-place and vehicle; Cf. the doctrine of consubstantiation and transubstantiation in the Blessed Eucharist. Hindus have their recognised ritual for inducing the presence of the God, and even of causing its cessation."

Holy Book and the personality of his Prophet,—in all which cases of these aids to *their* devotions the veneration meant for the *Ideal* is transferred to the *Visible* and the *Material*, only in varying degrees. Their churches and mosques and shrines, no less than the symbolic Cross or statuette, are held in sanctity not as the material dwelling-places or representations of the Eternal One,—*for His abode*, according to *all* creeds, *is the pervading universe and beyond*,—but only as places of worship or as repositories of relics, or as merely hallowed by associations; and so are the temples and shrines of the Hindus enshrining His manifestations under various allegorical representations; and theirs is the sublime realisation that 'this vast universe is the sacred temple of *Brahman* and the mind itself is His sacred shrine'. The tall sticks of wax burning before the Crucified Son—the glorious personification of man's suffering for his brother-man,—or the lights swinging from the ceiling or the incense placed in censers in the empty mosques and churches, shed forth the same amount of lustre and fragrance, and the tolling bells from the tops of the steeples and the Muezzins' piercing call to prayer thrill with the same religious fervour as do their prototypes in the Hindu temples. Rites and ceremonials grotesque or otherwise imposed by priest-crafts, and superstitions and caste-prejudices hem round all religions in some form or other, though their respective votaries

might be loth to admit; but in spite of its having an ordered system of its own fitting in with all grades of advancement, it is Hinduism alone that is too often condemned and maligned for the simple reason that it is misunderstood or not understood at all by the casual on-lookers who care not to know and only confine their gaze to the merest excrescences in its crudest forms. Mr. Burns, an alien authority, who made a special study of the subject in course of the Census operations of 1901 remarks thus in respect to the faith of even *the commonest populace*, subject *among all nations* to ignorant superstitions in the matter of their creeds and beliefs: "The great majority of Hindus have a firm belief in *One Supreme God*, called Bhagwan, Parameswar, Iswara, or Narain. . . . This involved a clear idea of a single personal God. . . . This is not limited to the more intelligent, but is distinctly characteristic of the Hindus as a whole." So, theirs is not a hopeless case altogether as many are apt to think, and they may still hope for salvation through faith and piety and righteousness which are *the common assets of all religions* and before which the varied observances and conventionalisms of diverse creeds shrink into trivialities and nothingness.

We have perhaps digressed a great deal,—have we? But this may to some extent help to palliate our ruffled feelings if what we shall presently

observe in this quarter give us any moral shock at the sight of what may look like rampant idolatory. So we had better leave off reflections for the present and look about.

Jnan Bapi

By the back-door of the Golden Temple and past the Deva Sabha we come to the spacious court where lie the JNAN BAPI well and *Gauri Sankar* Siva, the seated figure of Siva with Pārvati upon his thigh. Close by rests in blissful idleness the huge stone bull *Nandi*, painted vermilion and about seven feet high, presented by the Maharaja of Nepal,—a bold and beautiful piece of sculpture. A block of flat shapeless stone underneath the seat of Gauri Sankar is venerated under the name of *Tarakeswara Siva.* The spacious temple sheltering the Jnan Bapi has a colonnade of nearly a hundred artistically carved stone pillars supporting the roof (Plate X, I) and was erected in 1828 by Maharani Baija Bai, the widow of Daulat Rao Scindhia, and affords room enough to numbers of persons for their religious observances.

Iron railings enclose the raised walls of the famous well going by the name of *Jnan Bapi* or *Jnan Kup* (the Well of Wisdom)—wherein is said to have been hid the emblem of Siva, the original one of the old temple of Visweswara, thrown in by the priests when under Aurangzeb's orders the Moguls were said to have destroyed the old

temple. Legend relates that once in the olden ages of the gods, 'when no clouds would pour on earth, and no streams nor rivers were there, nor water but in the seas salt and sweet, *Ishana*—the Lord of the North-eastern quarter of the sky,—in course of his rambles arrived at Kasi then known as *Ananda Kanan* (the Bower of Bliss) and found a resplendent lingam shining in its brilliance'. Wishing to lave it in cold water he took Siva's trident and gave a thrust at this spot, and water 'clean and pure like the hearts of the good and white as the bright moonshine', welled out in abundance. Thus came this well into existence and being sacred to Siva became famous as the '*Well of Wisdom*'—for the word 'Siva' also signifies *Jnan* or 'wisdom'. By the side of the well sits an old Brahman with a pitcher and a spoon ready to deal out the water of wisdom to the devout who reverently accepts it in his open palm held cup-shape and sips a few drops therefrom.

Aurangzeb's Mosque

An open courtyard outside this temple with another banyan tree and the image of *Gangeswara Siva* at its foot, formed at one time a debatable ground over which the Hindus and the Mahomedans fought for long until the Magistrate of Benares interfered. And as a result, a door-way erected by the latter along the enclosure wall of the adjoining mosque to overlook the courtyard had to be closed up

with bricks, and remains to this day in that state. Above a raised platform stands this mosque with a small reservoir of water in front, and the popular belief is that Aurangzeb caused it to be built about 1669 upon the site of the former Visweswara temple after its demolition. [1]

The remains of *the old temple* (Plate V, 2) now existing in the ruins,—into which the western wall of the mosque has evidently been built,—go to prove that the old one was much larger and more spacious and imposing than the present Golden Temple. The elaborate and highly ornate carvings upon the ruined wall and the arches of the doorway are still to be seen at the back of the mosque; and the traces of a couple of peacocks and a pair of parrots scooped out of the carvings upon the central arch of the wall—still clearly visible in outlines—point to their undoubted Hindu origin, for the Mahomedans would not allow any representation of an animate being—the handiwork of the Almighty—to be made upon their structures. The

(1) According to General Cunningham, however, it was Jehangir who 'destroyed the great temple of Visweswara which was built by Raja Man Singh at Banàras at a cost of 36 lakhs of Rupees and built the Jâmi Musjid on its site.' Evidently, he must have meant the Adi-Visweswara temple over the other side of the Chauk Road near to which is a small mosque reputed to have been built by Jehangir upon the site of the old temple. Vide Cunningham's Archæological Survey Reports Vol. III, p. 7.

existence of the ruined wall impresses one with the idea that the builders of the mosque suffered it to stand to serve as a memento of Moslem triumph in this the most sacred spot of the Hindus. The terrace which is about five feet higher than the courtyard upon which this mosque stands, would seem to have been erected upon some pillars of Buddhistic design. Cell-like recesses, as are found in temple-monasteries of the earlier times, are to be seen here also below the terrace and tend to show that there had once been a Buddhistic structure on the spot over which the Hindu temple must have been erected after the fall of Buddhism, to be supplanted in its turn by Aurangzeb's mosque later on.

Adi-Visweswara

Coming out of this lane into the broad road leading to the Chauk, we may have a look at the temple of ADI-VISWESWARA—a large Siva emblem—to the north-west beyond Aurangzeb's mosque upon a terrace over a small rising ground, a little way off from the Carmichael Library. It is about sixty feet high and is said to have been built after the demolition of the magnificent temple erected by Raja Man Singh of Jaipore at a cost of "nearly thirty-six laks of five methkally ashrefis." Jehangir notes in his '*Memoirs*' that after throwing down the said temple, "on the spot and with the very same materials, I erected the great mosque, because the very name of Islam

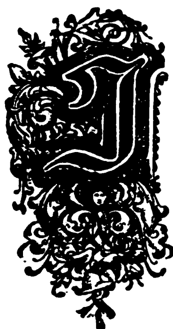
was proscribed at Benares, and with God's blessing it is my design, if I live, to fill it with true believers." Near it stands a small musjid built with the materials of Hindu architecture which supplies the basis for the popular belief that the site of the original Visweswara temple was shifted from this place when the mosque was erected.

Kasi Karwat

A short distance to the east of the temple of Adi-Visweswara is what is known as *Kashi Karwat.* It is inside a small building, and through its square vertical opening looks like a well underground much below the floor of the house, but it has no water, nor is it connected with any water-channel. Upon the stone-paved bottom below stands a large emblem which can be approached from above by a stairway. It is said people formerly believed that death at this place would immediately lead to emancipation from the chances of re-birth. Some persons availed of this easy means rather too literally, and the Government had to close the top with iron gratings allowing it to be removed only once a week.

(2)

On the North



NTO the labyrinths of narrow lanes and alleys in the eastern quarter lying along the river-side we now dive and find it full of shrines and sacred places and temples at very short intervals of spaces. A very popular one is the temple of SANKATA DEVI—an image of Durga in brass—with a figure of Ganesha and a crouching stone lion in front of the entrance; and any morning you may find numbers of devout reverend-looking Brahmans sitting cross-legged in a line in the hall in front and reading the sacred *Chandi* in praise of the goddess. Near it is the large emblem Vireswara Siva with the representation of a hooded serpent above it. Another temple not far from it is that of *Siddheswari*—another figure of Durga—with a well in the centre of the compound sacred to the Moon and known as *Chandrakup*.

Sankata Devi

The next temple of importance is the exceedingly rich and highly endowed GOPAL MANDIR

containing two golden images of Krishna and dedicated to his worship. It stands upon a very high and spacious terrace trellissed with white and black marble, and is approached through a lane lined with tinsel-shops on both sides. The decorations and the ornaments of the idols here are of the costliest nature and the ways and bearing of the Mohunt, the guardian of the temple, quite regal. A small house behind this temple is said to have been the abode of *Tulsi Das;* there is, however, another connected with his name near the Asi Ghat, which is of greater importance.

Gopal Mandir

To the west of the Gopal Mandir and the north-east extremity of the *Chaukhamba Gali*—so called from a building here supported on four low massive pillars—stands an ancient mosque with a corridor supported upon twenty-four square pillars of peculiar design 'probably adapted from some older Hindu edifice.'

Not very far from the Gopal Mandir, as you penetrate the narrow lanes where sun-rays seem to come down quite subdued, appears the temple of BHAIRONATH—the dreaded attendant of Siva,—considered to be the personification of Siva's anger and the reputed guardian of Siva's city, whom our European friends delight in styling the Spiritual Magistrate of Benares. The god in visible representation is a stout-looking

Bhaironath

image in black marble painted deep blue,—sometimes wearing a silver mask on the face,—with a dog beside him and holding a massive club in his hand. This temple was erected by the Peshwa Baji Rao of Poona, nearly a century now, on the site of the old temple which was a much smaller one. The temple looks fine, but is very much cramped for space. This shrine is a very popular one and numbers of people daily visit it. Priests sit upon the verandahs to purge you of all sins of omission and commission by a light tap of the bunch of peacock feathers they hold in their hands, expecting no doubt a consideration for this act of merit ; and it is interesting to observe how eagerly the elderly men and women hold up their little innocents to be thus cleansed of imaginary sins they have not yet grown old enough even to conceive of.

Naugraha

A short distance to the east along the road is the shrine of the nine planetary gods,—the temple of NAUGRAHA or NAVAGRAHA. It has a small room and through the fretted stone screen on the wall you can have a peep at them lying arranged in a row.

Dandapani

Further on, lies the shrine of DANDAPANI—a thick round rod of stone set upright and standing about four or five feet high with a silver mask at the top. This is considered to be the cudgel with which Bhaironath, the guardian of Siva's city chastises

the wrong-doers who have the misfortune of incurring his displeasure. Across the room on the left is the noted KAL KUP or the *Well of Fate*, reputed to presage death within six months to those who do not see their shadows reflected upon its water at mid-day. The sun-rays are at this hour admitted for a short while to alight upon the water through a curiously cut hole upon the trellis-work near the top, and hence the mystification. Within a stone enclosure adjoining the Kal Kup is what is known as the *Pancha Pandava* which is nothing but five Siva emblems lying there within a stone enclosure.

Kal Kup

Not very far from the temple of Bhaironath is a signboard upon the threshold of a small house pointing to you the last place of abode of the saintly *Paramhansa* TRAILANGA SWAMI who passed away about a quarter of a century ago at a fabulous old age. He is said to have been born at Holia in Vizianagram in the year 1529 Samvat of a devout Brahman family and to have relinquished the world at the age of forty-eight when he lost his mother. He travelled from Rameswaram to Tibet and Mansarowar where he practised *Yoga*, and then came to Benares. He stayed near the Dasaswamedh Ghat, and for a time at the Asi and Tulsi ghats as well, and at last settled down

Trailanga Swami

here in this *Asram* (retreat) above the Panchaganga Ghat. He was profoundly learned and has left his Sanskrit work '*Mahavakya Ratnavali*'; he used to talk but little except to his disciples and is said to have wielded miraculous powers and saved many persons from untimely death by simply touching their forehead with a little earth from the Ganges when they had apparently been given up for dead.

Popular tradition runs that he used to float upon the water of the Ganges seated with legs crossed for two or three days at a stretch even in the depth of the winter; and that on one such occasion an officer of the Ramnagar Raj saw him and took him up in his boat. While examining the officer's sword the Swami inadvertently dropped it in the water when in mid-stream. The former was rather annoyed at this, whereupon the sage dipped his hands into the water and brought up three swords exactly identical with the one he had dropped. As the officer was unable to pick out his own, the Swami gave him one and threw the other two into the water. On another occasion, a man from Serampore then living at Benares, felt very much distressed at heart without any apparent cause, and alarmed at the premonition approached the sage, who closed his eyes and sat meditating for a few minutes, and at last broke the news to him that his eldest son had that morning succumbed to cholera

at Serampore, hundreds of miles away,—which came out to be correct. Mystical as things like these might have seemed a few decades before and hard for any but the most easy credulity to gulp down, perhaps in these days of psychic researches and latter-day developments of occult science they would be viewed in a different light and take a different complexion.

Trailanga Swami's was a towering figure in Benares and a name widely known and respected throughout the length and breadth of India for his wisdom, learning and saintly life. The sign-board above the threshold leads you into the courtyard of his humble retreat, and in a narrow apartment under a low roof lies his statue in black marble representing him seated in *padmashan* with legs crossed as he used to sit in life and looking before him with piercing eyes. His own string of *rudraksha* is on the neck of the figure, and his wooden sandals and seat and old books have been preserved here with loving care. A very large Siva emblem lies in the courtyard and an image of *Kali* stands behind the statue. There are some stone slabs with mystic symbols and lotus and *chakra* (circle) inscribed upon them, and one of them is named *Ram Tarak Yantra.* Hallowed the spot that was the abode of a holy man!

Coming now to the road leading to Rajghat we find the *Machchhodari Tirth*—a small tank

of oval shape in a large compound now being converted into a garden. Near to it is the temple of KAMESWARA SIVA with an emblem in a railed cistern and another copper-plated one named *Durbasseswara* after the Rishi Durbāshā whose image is in the adjoining temple of *Naleswara* Siva. The temple of Kameswara is a very old one, and in its compound is a very large cluster of small temples on all sides filling up every available nook. Besides the large number of Siva emblems located in them, there are also the images of Rama and Sita, Narasinha, Laksmi and Surya Narain. A large peepul-tree in the middle of the small courtyard with its gnarled trunk and overspreading branches and a few tiny birds perching and frisking upon them in the noon-tide sun, and the subdued brightness of the flitting sun-rays alighting through the thick rustling foliage upon numbers of emblems and images grouped around it, make the scene one of idyllic restfulness.

Kameswara

Proceeding towards the north through a quarter inhabited mostly by Mahomedans of the poorest class we come to the small isolated temple of *Shohageswara Siva* with a well in front of it in the quiet silence of the neighbouring fields. Here are remains of sculptured stones scattered about, and numbers of them—probably parts of friezes of some building with carved

Shohageswara

figures thereupon—lie beside a peepul tree near the temple. This is not very far from the Arhai Kangura Mosque, and so the remains may relate to those of the Hindu structures that were used also in the construction of that mosque. One interesting object here is the large stone figure, evidently of Vishnu, partly mutilated but still showing enough of its neat execution. To the left a little off is the temple of *Omkareswara Siva* upon a slight eminence amidst a dense growth of jungles extending far and away. Close by on the right is a ruined old well which is pointed out as containing a very large lateral cave underneath and a passage leading to regions unknown.

Kirtibaseswara

Back southwards to the Raj Ghat road, we proceed to the western quarter towards the Municipal Park where a large number of ancient temples lie close to one another. The first, then, is the old temple of KIRTIBASESWARA to the right upon a slightly rising ground with a small garden in front and a small tank known as *Hans Tirtha* behind it. This temple is of later construction and its former site where the emblem was enshrined was at the place where the Alamgiri mosque now stands. Passing along the road you find the small twin temples of *Ratneswara Siva* and *Hanumanji*, the latter containing a large image of Hanuman, and both standing back to back and almost encroaching upon the road itself

A few paces off is the ALAMGIRI MOSQUE named after Aurangzeb who is reputed to have caused it to be erected upon the remains of the old temple of Kirtibaseswara in 1659—as would appear from an inscription in Arabic to the effect: "Turn your face towards the sacred mosque. 1077 Hijira." The massive capitals and the rows of lofty pillars with the carvings at the base, point them out to be materials of the old Hindu temple it had displaced. The Rev. Mr. Sherring ascribes them to some date five or six centuries back and they are interesting and striking as fine examples of the Hindu art.

Alamgiri Mosque

Somewhat to the north-east of the Municipal Park stands *the oldest of the existing temples* in Benares—that of BRIDDHAKALESWARA. It is a very plain temple with a couple of spires containing the emblem within a stone cistern a little below the level of the floor. In the adjoining compartment is the *Omkareswara Siva.* The temple is famed to have been in existence from the middle Brahmanic period between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries and is said to have been erected by a Raja of Nandibardhan in Southern India named Briddhakāl and to have formerly possessed a dozen separate courts. The important one among them in existence at present is where a small circular tank of foul water about two yards in diameter lies in the middle. It goes by the name of *Amrita*

Briddha-kaleswara

Kup, and its water is supposed to be efficacious in curing various skin-diseases. Close by lies another well with water fit to drink, and to the north of it in another court approached through a narrow corridor and enclosed by old walls are the temples of *Markendeswara* and *Daksheswara Sivas* said to have been established by Rishi Markendeya and Daksha Prajāpati. The whole is, however, in a very neglected and woe-begone condition and overgrown with weeds. A little to the west of the temple of Briddhakaleswara is the temple of *Alpamriteswara*, also known as *Mrityunjaya Siva.*

Bara Ganesha

Further off to the west and on the western side of the Municipal Park is the temple of BARA GANESHA standing upon a high terrace above the level of the street where stands a beautifully carved *Sati* stone with a pair of quaint youthful figures in a standing posture. This temple locates a very large image of the elephant-headed god painted deep vermilion with silver hands and feet. Worshipped at the commencement of all ceremonies and believed to bring every undertaking to a successful issue, the fane of this god is approached by numbers of people on all occasions. A rather giant of a rat, also painted red and of the size of a full-grown dog, stands in the verandah in front. This temple is said to have been erected about seventy years ago, but the image is many centuries

old.[1] Adjoining this is the temple of *Hanuman* and at some distance is that of *Jagannath.*

Jageswara

We next pass on to the temple of *Jageswara*, the Lord of Sacrifices, lying towards the north-west. The emblem here is a large round tall piece of black stone, so called from its origin in course of a great sacrifice. It is of great sanctity and held in high esteem, and people of all classes great and small frequent the shrine in numbers. Close to this is the large *Iswarganji Tank.*

Kasi Devi

The temple of KASI DEVI, the tutelary deity of Benares, is also very near and is considered to be *the Central Spot of Benares.* A few steps off are the *Karnaghanta Talao* with its stone stairs leading to the water below and the temple of *Veda Vyas* containing his image upon its southern bank. A little to the north of the temple of Kasi Devi lies one containing the image known as *Bhut-Bhairo*, and near to it is the large *Jyestheswara* Siva.

(1) In this connection it may be interesting to note that the celebrated traveller Alexander Von Humboldt came across an old Mexican painting when he was in America representing the head of an elephant on the body of a man, which made him remark: 'it presents some remarkable and apparently not accidental resemblances with the Hindu Ganesh.'

Advancing further northward we catch sight of the temple of *Bageswari*. The goddess is seated upon a crouching lion and her silver face only is visible, the rest of her body being covered by a profusion of garlands. A number of Brahmans here sit reciting *Mantras* in praise of the goddess, and a large white lion of stone presented by Raja Lal Bahadur Singh of Ahmety frowns in front in the quadrangle. There are images of Rama, Laksmana, and Sita as well in this temple. Very close to this lie the temples of *Jwarahareswara* and *Siddheswara* Sivas.

Bageswari

A short distance off is the NAG KUA, or the *Serpents' Well*, in the quarter bearing its name and considered to be *the oldest historical place* in Benares. The stones used in the well are supposed to show marks of great antiquity, and a Raja is reputed to have repaired the well in Samvat 1825. The bottom of the well is reached by a series of steep stone stairs very solid in make; and there are three serpents carved in a niche in the well and a Siva emblem.

Nag Kua

Here, perhaps, we have reached the northernmost point of Benares containing Hindu shrines and temples. There is one other some distance off on the north of the Barana known as *Kapila Tirtha* or

Kapildhara

KAPILDHARA situate on the Panchkoshi Road limiting the sacred ten-mile radius of Benares. The legend connected with this holy tank runs to the effect that five cows came down from *Golok*, the abode of Vishnu, after Siva had returned to Kasi from the Mandāra mountains. And as he cast upon them his kindly look, milk began to from flow their udder in copious squirts and thus came a pool into existence, now transformed into this tank of sweet water in this *Kali* age.

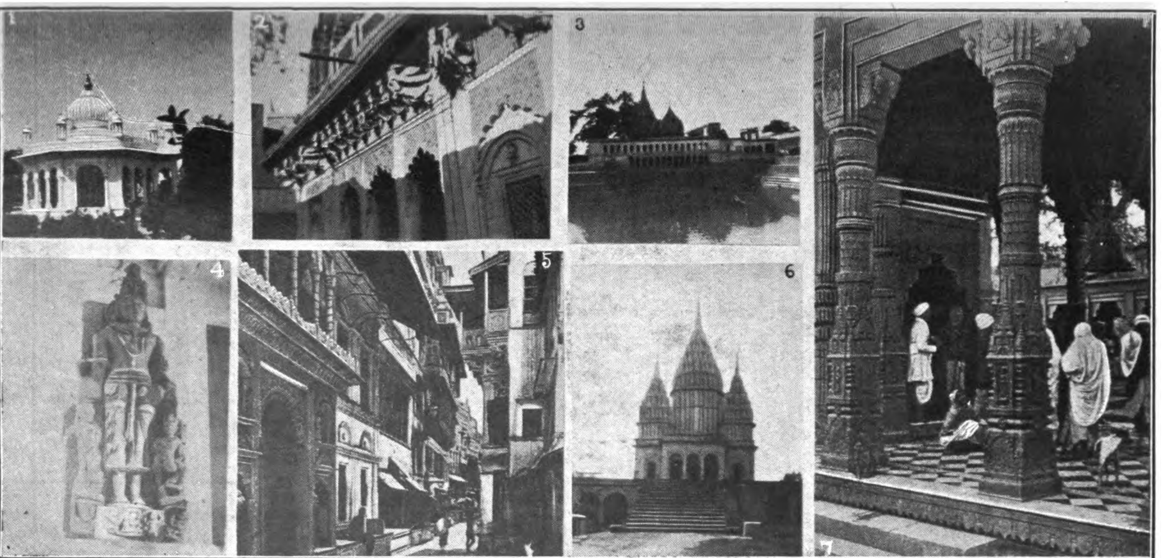
(3)

On the South



OW with our pilgrimage to the southern quarter. Bending our steps towards the south-west and passing close by the Queen's College, we soon have a glimpse of the spacious grounds of the residence of the Maharaja of Hutwa on the western part of the city. Behind it lies the PISACH MOCHAN tank—a large expanse of clear water—famous as the site where Bhaironath had decapitated a *pisach* (demon) who had attempted to effect a forcible entry into Kasi. When the head, which had retained its animation and had not lost its power of speech, was presented before Visweswara it prayed that it should be allowed to stay at Kasi and that pilgrims to Gaya should be enjoined to visit this tank—into which Bhaironath was to throw the head—before starting on their journey. Both these prayers Visweswara was gracious enough to grant, and hence arose the sanctity of this place. A few small temples stand on the bank, one of which had been erected by the famous Mirā Bai, the Queen-poetess of Udaipur, who according

Pisach Mochan



1. Bhaskaranand Mausoleum. 2. Ahmety Temple. 3. Durga Kund and Temple.
4. Vishnu image, Sankudhara. 5. A Benares Street. 6 Rani Barahar's Temple.
7. Durga Temple (porch).

to the Vaishnava work "*Bhaktamāla*," had to leave her royal palace as she would not abandon the worship of Krishna. There are a number of images of various gods and with them in an open verandah is the large stone head representing the *pisach* in question.

As we emerge into the high-road a dozen men in an orderly line — sojourners evidently from a great distance—precede us bearing straw baskets slung from poles upon their shoulders with small red pennons flying above them. With great care are they carrying the sacred water from the source of the Ganges, which they have brought from distant Hurdwar in the Himalayas with the object of bathing the great god Visweswara therewith. Further to the south is the large tank with stone stairs known as PITRI KUND with three Siva temples on the north bank, and a little to the west is the MATRI KUND so called on account of the oblations offered here to the manes of the paternal and maternal ancestors. The latter is of an irregular shape and is in an exceedingly bad condition being almost filled up with refuse on one side and thus reduced to a very small pool of very foul water.

Pitri Kund and Matri Kund

Further south still is the SURAJ KUND with a small temple erected by the Raja of Kota Bundi and dedicated to the sun-god containing the symbolic

image of *Surya Narain.*[1] This shrine is also called the Sambāditya Temple as having been built by the mythical prince Samba who is reputed to have also erected the wonderful Sun-temple at Kanarak in Orissa—

Suraj Kund

(1) Though this is the solitary temple at Benares set apart for the worship of the Sun, still the Sun is daily invoked by every Hindu, even allegorically in reciting the sacred GAYATRI. It may not thus be out of place to quote what Prescott in his flowing language wrote in his 'Conquest of Peru' regarding Sun-worship in that portion of the globe in the most ancient times: "The most renowned of the Peruvian temples, the pride of the capital, and the wonder of the empire, was at Cuzco . . . The interior of the temple was the most worthy of admiration. It was totally a mine of gold. On the western wall was emblazoned a representation of the deity, consisting of a human countenance, looking forth amidst innumerable rays of light, which emanated from it in every direction, in the same manner as the sun is often personified with us. The figure was engraved on a massive plate of gold, of enormous dimensions, thickly powdered with emeralds and precious stones. It was so situated in front of the great eastern portal that the rays of the morning sun fell directly upon it, and at its rising, lighted up the whole of the apartment with an effulgence that seemed more than natural, and which was reflected back from the golden ornaments with which the walls and ceiling were incrusted. Gold, in the figurative language of the people, was the tears wept by the sun, and every part of the interior of the temple glowed with burnished plates and studs of the precious metals. The cornices which surrounded the walls of the sanctuary were of the same costly material, and a broad belt of gold work let into the stone work, encompassed the whole interior of the edifice."

still a marvel of the sculptor's art. A mutilated figure, *Ashtanga Bhairab*, is in another temple near to it, and at a little distance is the *Dhrubeswara Siva.*

Laksmi Kund

Next, on the north of the road leading to Dasaswamedh ghat, lies the LAKSMI KUND, a large tank of good clear water with paved banks and with stairs running from the middle of each of them. On the north bank is the temple of *Mahalaksmi* in which are the images of Laksmi with a golden face and of *Mahakali* and *Saraswati* on the two sides and *Laksmi Vinayak Ganesh* in a niche in the wall. As you pass through the close narrow lane and emerge in sight of the large expanse of clear water bounded by the paved banks, the whole scene smiles as it were with its sunlit brightness and there is a pleasant sense of welcome relief after the dust and dirt of the winding streets.

Sankaracharya

Past the borders of the quarters of the Theosophical Society, we now turn westwards. Very calm and quiet, and interspersed with numbers of gardens and sparse habitations is this retired quarter. To the south of the road a little into the interior lies the *muth* of the great SANKARACHARYA erected by the Maharaja of Nepal in the midst of a large garden of plums and guavas whose drooping branches are holding forth bunches of bright tempting fruits,

Born at Kalpi in Kerala or the Malabar District in Southern India of a family of Nambudri Brahmans this great champion of Vedantism and Advaitism had become a *Sannyasin* on the anniversary of his ninth birth-day; but unlike Buddha who slipped away unseen in the depth of night, he relinquished the world after taking leave of his mother and persuading her to permit him to do so. When only twelve, he commenced writing his famous *Commentaries* upon *Sreemadvagavat Geeta* and the *Upanishads* and other works which have been the marvel of all ages as intellectual achievments of the very highest order. The precocity of his master-intellect unparalleled in the history of the world was almost supernatural, and we have the wonderful spectacle of the vast mass of his philosophical writings being completed by his sixteenth year. At the very young age of thirty-two he obtained his final emancipation at Kedarnath in the Himalayas, and in course of this brief span of eternal time alloted to him he had travelled all over India and established the order of the *Dasnami Sannyasis* (the ten sects) and founded four *muths*—the *Sringeri* in Mysore, the *Gobardhan* at Puri in Orissa, the *Sarada* at Dwarika in Kathiwar, and the *Joshi* at Badrinath in the Himalayas,—placing four of his disciples at their heads. The first three have still retained their ancient glory, and the one in Southern India going by the name of *Sringeri*

muth [1] at the source of the Tungabhadra in the Kadur district of Mysore with an estate of Rs 45,000 a year, is the most famous at the present time. The most learned among his disciples, Mandana, was placed at its head and a temple dedicated to the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati, was erected by Sankara and under the name of *Sarada* the Goddess is still the presiding deity of this *muth.* It is the residence of the head of the order who adopts the name '*Sri Jagatguru Sankaracharya*' and is accepted as the religious head of Hindu India.

This temple in Benares contains a very beautiful white marble statue of this regenerator of Hinduism (Plate IV, 2) in a sitting posture with his *danda* (rod) and *kamandalu* (water-pot)—symbolic of the order of the Dandis to which he belonged—lying by his side. A calm and placid expression and an air of grace sit upon the youthful face and eyes. Far away from all noise and bustle of the city, this is indeed a veritable retreat for calm and quiet contemplation and reminds one of the beautiful lines of old Chaucer:

"Wav'ring as winds the breath of fortune blows,
No power can turn it, no prayer compose,
Deep in some hermit's solitary cell,
Repose and ease and contemplation dwell."

(Modernised).

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(1) A portion of it was lately destroyed by a disastrous fire on the 28th February 1911 with a number of exquisitely carved ancient pillars.

Towards the south-east the small shrines of *Batuk Bhairab*, *Kamachchha Devi*, and *Baidyanath Siva* are passed in quick succession along the winding lanes. This last has a temple with fine carved stone pillars and mythological engravings upon the walls. A little further off is *Bhutnath*—one of the very few full-bodied images of Siva in Benares. Most of these temples have *atithisalas* for sheltering pilgrims attached to them, and all of them lie to the south-west of the Central Hindu College.

Sankudhara

A little way off, to the south of the Bhelupura Waterworks is a fine large tank known as SANKUDHARA also called the *Dwaraka Tirtha*, because of the tradition that Krishna killed the demon *Sankasura* here. Upon a rising ground on the east is a large Vaishnavite *muth* of the followers of Ramanand and Ramanuja Swami containing a large image of Krishna styled *Dwarakadhiswara* and several other smaller ones. The same temple also locates the image of *Hanumanji*. But the most interesting object here is the large piece of black sculptured stone standing in the veranda to the left of the doorway of a small temple of Siva just over the eastern bank of the tank (Plate XI, 4). A finely cut and elaborately decorated image of the four-armed Vishnu known as *Tribakra Narayan* or *Laksmi Narayan* stands in the centre of a group consisting of a couple of female figures standing on either side, and a man and a

woman posed at the further ends in the attitude of prayer. A few smaller figures with palms joined together sit below upon the pedestal. Three arms of the central figure are broken or mutilated, but it is still a fine example of the Hindu art. It is reported to have been found in the bed of the Ganges by a former Mohunt of the Vaishnavite muth and placed here in this temple. This resembles the fine standing figure of Vishnu with four arms found by General Cunningham at Devathala or *Devasthala* on the road to Dinajpur, 15 miles to the north of Pandua. [1]

Gurudham

Eastwards hence to the large shady grove in the middle of which stands a two-storied building containing the images of Radha and Krishna—known as *Gurudham* connected with the memory of Raja Joy Narain Ghosal and owned by the Raj family of Bhukailas of Calcutta. The approach to the house from the road is a fine long walk through an avenue of shady trees. At a short distance from this is what is known as *Menaka Bari*.

Kumareswara Siva

Next comes the beautiful temple of KUMARESWARA SIVA containing a number of very fine artistically worked statues of various gods and goddesses, all in pure white marble, ranged along the inner walls. In an adjoining chamber is a beautiful

(1) See Plate XXVII, Cunningham's Archæological Survey Reports, Vol. XV (1879-80).

white marble statue of Swami Bhaskaranand, perhaps the best one in Benares. In remembrance of the good the Swami had done her, the Rani of Barahar in Southern India made him an offering of a lakh and a half of rupees, and on his refusal to accept the same, she caused this fine temple and the adjoining *atithisala* for pilgrims to be erected in response to his wishes.

Sankat Mochan

Now into a narrow lane and through a long and tortuous pathway inside a large greenwood till we arrive at the temple of *Sankat Mochan* (deliverer from danger), a name applied to the monkey-god Hanuman for the very substantial help he had rendered to Rama in his troubles. Hoary peepuls overhung with thick clustering creepers dangling from their branches overshadow the locality ; on the left appears the temple of Hanuman with an image of large proportions, and on the right another with images of Rama, Laksmana and Sita. The inner walls and the ceiling of this latter one are literally covered over with brilliantly coloured scenes from Rama's life and mythological pictures of the ten Avatars and the ten Mahavidyas, imparting a very gorgeous look to it. The image of Hanuman is said to have been established here by Tulsi Das, whose own statue is pointed out resting upon a lotus-shaped marble-slab under a round canopy behind this temple. Though in a very secluded nook and far away from the public thoroughfare, it is none the less popular and largely visited.

Back to the broad road, and after a visit to the Rani of Barahar's fine temple (Plate XI, 6) of Sita, Rama and Laksmi Narayan, we approach the DURGA KUND and the famous TEMPLE OF DURGA by its side. Amid a dense conglomeration of fine gold-tipped cupolas symmetrically arranged, the lofty steeple of the temple surmounted by a golden trident rises high in a very pleasant manner. The temple and the fine tank (Plate XI, 3) with running stairs and monkeys sporting upon them are both of them gifts of Rani Bhawani, the widow of Maharaja Ramkanta of Nattore in Bengal. The temple is in the quadrangle and is much visited by pilgrims, and is next in importance only to those of Annapurna and Visweswara. This in all Benares is the only shrine where sacrifices are offered, and there is none other where slaughter in any shape takes place. A tall pillar with the figure of a lion upon the top stands in front of the temple, and covered verandahs running all round afford shelter to pilgrims and devotees. Finely sculptured bas-reliefs decorate the temple and its arches, and a number of beautifully carved pillars line the porch (Plate XI, 7), the floor of which is inlaid with black and white marble. It has also acquired the name of the *Monkey Temple* on account of its being infested with monkeys—quite a number of families with little sucklings holding fast to the older ones as the latter skip from place to place.

Temple of Durga

They keep to the traditions of their race for frolic and mischief and are not in the least disinclined to accept your bounty in the shape of anything eatable you may like to favor them with. As you hold out your hand with a few grains of pulse in your open palm, up scampers a big fellow, catches hold of it with one hand and with the fingers of the other picks them up and throws them deftly into his mouth till the side-pouches fill and bloat out, and then leaves you without any sign of offering the poorest of thanks for the treat, and walks away munching and munching and poking the grains out from beneath the jaws with the finger-tips.

Bhaskaranand

To the east of the temple of Durga lies Rani Bhawani's square tank *Kurukshetra Talao* and the *Ananda Bag* garden formerly belonging to the Marhatta Chief Amritalal Peshwa. This latter afterwards passed into the hands of the British and was sold after the Sepoy Mutiny to the Raja of Ahmety. This is the famous *asram* or retreat of the saintly *Paramhansa* SWAMI BHASKARANAND SARASWATI, the glory of Benares and held in high esteem not only in India but also in Europe and America. On account of his vast erudition and piety his name had attained such wide celebrity that most of the eminent visitors to this city—even from the most distant and out-of-the-way corners of the world

like New Zealand, Iceland and China, not to speak of almost all parts of the far-off Europe—came to see him under his humble roof at this place; and the present Czar of all the Russias while visiting India as the Czarevitch in 1890 reckoned himself amongst the number of his visitors. He was a Kanouj Brahman born in A. D.1833 at Maithilalpur in the Cawnpur district, and even from his childhood a supreme indifference to all worldly concerns characterised all his actions. His loving parents anticipating the bent of his mind got him married and attempted to bind him down to his home by ties of love and affection; but he soon tore himself away—even on the very night his only child was born—like the great Buddha, and renounced the world and plunged into the depths of the night all alone though he was but eighteen at the time. He became an ascetic and entered the order of Sannyasis when he was twenty-seven, and travelled all over India on foot for thirteen years. On his arrival at Benares, upon the earnest entreaty of Raja Lal Madhav Singh of Ahmety, he consented to reside in this garden and lived here for twenty-six years till he passed away in *samadhi* [1] in 1899. He left an invaluable work in Sanskrit, '*Swarājya Shiddhi Nayaka*'.

(1) "Samadhi is the state in which the ascetic loses the consciousness of every individuality, including his own. He becomes the All".—H. P. Blavatsky's "Voice of Silence".

In this quiet quarter and far away from all bustle and commotion of the city, the holy man lived amidst the peaceful surroundings of this garden. A statue in white marble faithful to his emaciated frame rests in a small house for the present and awaits removal to the beautiful mausoleum of milk-white marble (Plate XI, 1) with a fine dome and gilt spires in the centre of the compound erected upon the spot where he had been buried. Inside the silver doors is a marble *vedi* (altar) beneath which lie his remains, and behind a screen of fretted white marble is the room set apart for the location of the statue. An air of peace and purity soothes the mind as you rest here for a while and look upon this most handsome and artistic marble edifice that cost about a lakh and a quarter and is perhaps the only one of white marble of note in Benares with the exception of the small temple of Saraswati in the Central Hindu College (Plate III, 1).

Bhaskaranand used usually to lie immersed in devotion in some underground cell inside the building and his orders on such occasions were to let in none into the garden. It is said that a powerful Indian prince once went to see him, and finding the gate closed and would not be opened at his bidding, had it forced open and entered the bower of *Ketaki* flowers where Bhaskaranand was at the time. Here he found what looked

like a couple of lifeless bodies—lying stretched full length upon the ground—of Bhaskaranand and Trailanga Swami, the latter having been there on a visit to him. He waited for a time, but there was no sign of animation, and then he touched the body of the latter. At once as if by an electric thrill passing through the frames of both, they began to breathe heavily, woke up and rose to their feet, and looked at him with eyes of fire, so angered they seemed at this intrusion. The Raja fled before them in fear, but could not proceed farther than a few steps, fell down senseless and thus he lay for fully half a day! On another occasion while expounding the falsity and illusory nature of all earthly objects to Sir Romesh Chander Mitter, the late Judge of the Calcutta High Court, he is said to have vanished away thrice into the air even as he sat, thus giving a practical exposition of what he had been saying! Such are a couple of anecdotes out of numbers connected with his name. Whether high development of occult powers makes miraculous actions possible is not a subject we can just now pause to consider. Trailanga Swami had also been reputed to have similar powers, and with another holy personage, Visuddhanand Saraswati—the trio formed the last connecting link with the age of the ancient *Rishis* and were the veritable landmarks of Benares, whose abodes were as much frequented and held in sanctity as any temple here.

From here to the JAGANNATH TEMPLE is not a very far cry, and with it you reach the point in the farthest south of this city where all temples end. Calm, cool and quiet is the large compound of this solitary temple standing by the side of the Asi streamlet. A long shaded walk along the outer court brings you in front of a large bell suspended a little way off from the low gateway of the temple. Inside stand *Jagannath* and *Balabhadra* with *Shubhadra* between them even as they are represented at Puri. In the four corners of the court are the images of Krishna playing upon a flute, of Krishna seated upon the hood of the serpent overpowering the Kālia Nāg, of Rama and Sita gorgeously decked, and of Laksmi Nārain.

Jagannath

In another temple just at the back is the gigantic white figure of the lion-mouthed *Nara-Sinha*, the avatar of Vishnu who killed the dreaded Demon-king Hiranyakasipu to save his son Prahlad. This young prince had turned a worshipper of Krishna against his father's will and had at his bidding been thrown into the fire and the sea and under the feet of an elephant as well, but had every time come out unscathed. Fabulous no doubt all this reads; but fire-walking has been exhibited with success in course of the last few years, and anent this last elephant incident, the

Nara-Sinha

achievements of a present-day youth of Vizianagram tend to foster the belief that though much mixed up with poetical exaggeration all the recitals in the Puranas are not always absolute myth. The youngest among three brothers and only twenty-nine and every inch of him a remarkably well-bred gentleman of good education, Prefessor Ramamurti Naidu, looks no way much above the ordinary run of men in make and stature. Yet he has repeatedly astounded all observers by allowing *a three-ton elephant* to walk across his breast before thousands of people in most of the important cities of India. By such feats in these degenerate days, and emerging unharmed like Prahlad from beneath the elephant's feet, he proves the possibility of the doings of much greater things in the blessed ages of the glorious past. It is not animal strength alone, but the concentration of physical powers by will-force coupled with the culture of the moral faculties and *Yoga* observances that render the performance of all such exploits possible,—he once explained in answer to our queries as to the secret of his success. His regrets were sincere as with mournful looks he deplored our degeneracy ascribing it to our neglect of our own old systems.

As we come out of the Jagannath Temple and walk northward, we leave on our left the *Bhaskar Pushkar Tirth*—two adjoining wells joined together at the bottom. And further on, we find the notable

Lolarka Kund

LOLARKA KUND with a beautiful temple just to the South. This also is a double-mouthed well and has two shafts leading to the water below, which pass through an arch in the wall and connect the contents of both. The water can be approached by three flights of stairs running down from above. This Kund lies to the north-east of Kurukshetra Talao and has a peculiar appearance.

Now towards the very thickly populated quarter bordering the river and extending a considerable way towards the west. This is popularly known as the *Bengalitola* from the fact that the Bengali population settled in Benares is thickly clustered in this quarter, the selection of this locality being due to their anxiety to live near the holy Ganges and to have the full secular and religious benefit of a daily bath in its sacred water. Among the very large number of temples and shrines here the most important one is that of *Kedarnath* upon the river-bank which we shall visit in course of our trip along the river.

Tilbhandeswara

The TILBHANDESWARA SIVA in this quarter located in a temple in a narrow lane on our way is a prominent one. It is a huge round dome-shaped black uncarved marble four and a half feet high and quite fifteen in diameter—supposed to be increasing in bulk by the size of a *til* (sesamum) every

day. It almost fills up the small chamber where it stands ; and a large stone bull reposes in front of it on the veranda outside. Numerous emblems and images lie all about the house, and beneath a peepul-tree outside are numbers of carved stones strewn about around its trunk. One among them is of much interest—the remnant of an image up to the waist in very finely cut and chiselled black marble, partly mutilated in the face and arms and styled *Birbhadra*, the attendant of Siva. The temple and its enclosure stand much above the level of the street and is well worth a visit owing to the association of great antiquity with its images and sculptures ; and so is the temple of *Mukteswara* lying near the south-west of it.

Man Sarowar

Walking in a north-easterly direction and jostling your way through the thick crowd of passers-by along a very narrow and tortuous thoroughfare, you come to the large tank excavated by Raja Man Singh and known as MAN SAROWAR. It is a fine tank with numbers of small temples all around, the major portion of them crowding upon the northern bank. But it is in a rather neglected condition and its stairs are sadly in need of repair.

Another object of interest in the Bengali quarter is the small temple of *Agastyeswara* Siva under spreading *neems* at the Agastya Kund Muhulla. Inside is a large emblem with images of Ganesha

and Lopāmudra Devi, the wife of Agastya, in the niches of the wall. It is associated

Agastya Kund

with the Kund of this name which was in front of it, but which is said to have been filled up and a building erected on its site. Thus runs the Pauranic tradition in this connection: The Vindhya mountain jealous of the superiority of the Sumeru distended itself so far and raised itself so high as to block the path through which the sun daily coursed. Thereupon, the great Rishi Agastya, who had his hermitage here, left Kasi at the request of the gods to humble Vindhya's pride. The mountain bent down before him in obeisance as soon as the holy man approached, and the Rishi said, "Rest as low till I come back," and went away towards the south never to return. Hence is the popular phrase '*Agastya Jatra*'—meaning the starting on a journey never to return.

Thus far we have travelled all over the interior of the city and visited all the principal shrines and notable temples Though numerous enough to tire out our patience, our catalogue has by no means been very exhaustive. We have still to see some very important shrines along the river-bank above the several sacred ghats that pave the major portion of its lengthy expanse with their massive solid running stairs.

So, coming eastwards and threading our way

through a large system of mazy crowded lanes with all manner of ups and downs along short flights of stony stairs, we pass towards the river-side and emerge into the open upon the broad terrace of *Ahalya Bai's Ghat* with the glittering mass of the moving ripples rolling along. The white marble statue of that renowned Marhatta princess—who had erected the ghat that immortalises her name—posed in the act of worship with a small Siva in hand, is in a niche in the inner wall of the temple of Siva standing on the left. On the right, high above the water is another, and by its side is the building where lived SWAMI VISHUDDHANAND SARASWATI—a Brahman from Kalyan in Southern India and a revered sage of great erudition who died in 1898 at the advanced age of ninety-three. His sandals, a large conch, and other knick-knacks have been preserved here as the valued relics of the holy man upon the spot where he used to sit. There is a *guhā* or cell inside the building with a small entrance which is pointed out by his followers living there as the place where the saintly personage used to lie in *samadhi*. Ahalya Bai's *Chhattra* where a number of people are daily fed adjoins her temple.

Vishuddhanand Saraswati

Down the fine broad stairs we descend and approach the small flat-roofed temple of SITALA DEVI just above the water's edge, containing a

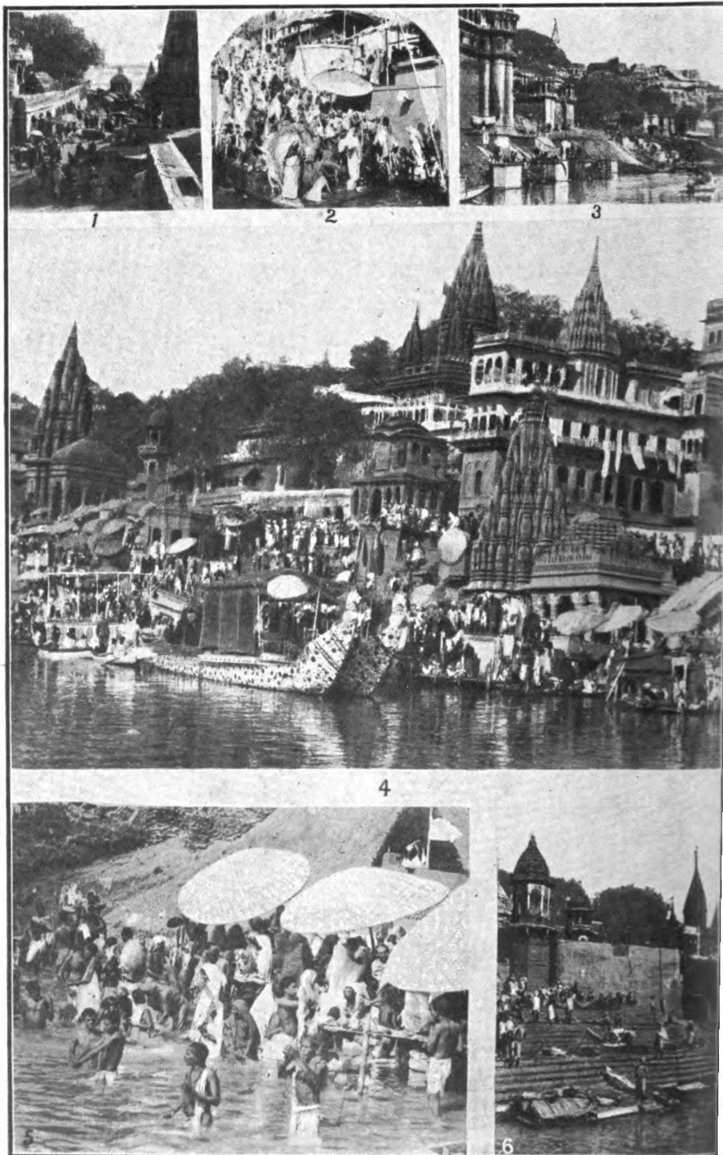
large Siva emblem on the floor and the carved figure of Sitala Devi on the north and of Siva and Parvati sitting together in the western corner of the temple. During the rains when the river is swollen the images are all submerged and almost the whole of the body of the temple goes under the water.

Sitala Devi

The Dasaswamedh ghat whence we had started on our pilgrimage lies just to the north, and as we prepare to approach it, behold, a couple of up-country women advance towards the temple and stand at the entrance like a pair of delicately carved statuary in their picturesque drapery of pink and light blue set, as it were, against a background of the azure sky and the greenish stream. And soon in ardent fervour and with glistening eyes they begin to chant some hymns and sing feelingly in their sweet silvery swelling voices filling the air with melody and the hearts of the listeners with an indescribable pathos. No wonder that we linger here a few minutes longer than our leisure should permit, thus bringing this much of our pilgrimage to a musical termination, with our recollections of what seemed incongruous and fantastic melting away in the sweet cadence and harmony that ever regulate the universe.



PLATE XII



1. A Road to the Ghat
2. Women's Bathing Ghat.
3. Ganga Mehal Ghat.
4. Manikarnika Ghat.
5. Bathing Scene.
6. Burning Ghat.

Chapter IX

ALONG THE RIVER

"The Ganges that flows—it is God ; the ocean that roars—it is God ; the wind that blows—it is Him ; the cloud that thunders, the lightning that flashes,—it is Him. As from all eternity the universe existed in the spirit of Brahma, so to-day is all that exists His image."

—The Veda.



HE sacred bathing *ghats*, some sixty in number—the major portion of them dating from the eighteenth century—line the sloping western bank surmounted by lofty temples and palatial buildings. A pleasant bracing breeze passes across the glistening water bearing patches of stray fleecy clouds above and toning down the heat and mellowing the glare of the shooting sun-rays. The Dasaswamedh ghat is astir with crowds of people in motley groups hurrying to the boats about to move away from the bank. Rival boatmen oars in hand keep shouting at the top of their voices luring passengers with promises of immediate start and no tarrying ; and each is so earnest that the bewildered customer does not know which among them to patronise. A river-trip in one of the *bhaolia* boats, always to be found here in plenty, would be very pleasant

and enjoyable, and we should in the first instance instruct our boatmen to row us down the river towards the north to enable us to have a look at some very interesting scenes and important shrines along that portion of the river-bank. Frequently should we have to step ashore at the important ghats where our interest centres most, and on our way back we must go far up the river and land at Ramnagar to see the Maharaja's Fort and garden and his fine Temple of Durga. Before, however, you undertake the trip southward, it were but fair that you should be enjoined to take every possible care of your precious limbs and be warned against taking a dip into the eternity even by accident on the portion of the other bank of the river going by the name of *Vyas Kasi*, for if you do, you will emerge in your next birth in a form far from being pleasing or desirable.

The Vyasa Episode

A tale hangs by it to the effect that Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas, had once quarrelled with Siva who turned him out of Kasi for reviling Vishnu and laying a curse upon its people that any sin committed here would be beyond atonement. Vyasa thereupon resolved to build a city like Kasi and of as great religious eminence as Siva's Kasi itself, which had the merit of translating men to heaven and of making them merge in Siva if they happened to die within the five *cros* of its sacred precincts.

Vyasa succeeded after infinite troubles in building a city on the other side of the river, but he had to seek the aid of the goddess Annapurna for conferring upon it the potency of making those who die there turn to Siva. This boon the goddess was rather loth to grant; but being attracted by his devotions she approached him in the shape of a very repulsive decrepit old woman, and — as the great immortal Bengali poet Bharat Chandra so graphically and humourously describes,—artfully enquired of Vyasa numbers of times as to what became of men dying there. Vyasa answered patiently, once,—twice,—thrice, expatiating upon the merits of his city,—but she feigned deafness and kept on repeating her query; till at last the exasperated Vyasa roared out angrily, "Whoever dieth here, becometh an ass,"—whereupon the old woman promptly rejoined that she had heard quite enough and vanished saying, "Be it so"! and left the crest-fallen Vyasa utterly dumb-founded!—Hence my caution!

Fortified thus against all ills threatening us on the other shore of life, we may now start. The water is clear and crystalline and of a greenish tint sparkling and glistening. A wide expanse of sand spreads up to the eastern bank and Ramnagar Fort looms in the farthest south-east. Passing midstream, the eye takes at a single sweep the vast panorama of the crescent-bank studded with myriads of tall spires plain and gilt and lofty

temples and beautiful palaces three to six stories high. Far off due north runs the network of the Dufferin Bridge holding the two banks of the holy stream in its iron grip; and as you turn your eyes about, prominent among the clustering structures appear the twin towers of Beni Madho dominating the neighbourhood. Magnificent palaces of white and yellow towering upon their precipitous foundations of massive stone rising sheer out of the water lapping at their feet and interspersed with towering temple-steeples shooting towards the sky, make a scene of unsurpassed splendour and unparalleled beauty. "For picturesqueness and grandeur", writes Mr. Sherring, "no sight *in all the world* can well surpass that of Benares as seen from the river Ganges."

(1)

Northward



SMALL colony of ash-smeared *Shadhus* (ascetics) burdened with heavy matted locks have pitched their improvised tents of large portable cloth umbrellas of quite modern pattern and are sitting cross-legged in front of smoking logs of wood with an air of perfect self-content close by the DASASWAMEDH GHAT (Plate IV, 1, 3). *Brahmeswara* and *Dasaswamedheswara* are the important Sivas of this Ghat, and to the north is another—*Sulatankeswara*— of immense proportions that lies submerged during the rains. The broad stairs of the ghat rising tier upon tier look exceedingly solid. But nearly all of them together with the shrines on the edges lie under water and buried in the silt during the rainy season when the Ganges rises some forty feet higher than its winter level and rushes along in her full expanse in mighty torrents, and the water dyed muddy yellow approaches the floor of the houses above and almost reaches the terrace of the lofty temple yonder abutting towards the water. After the floods subside people have a great

deal to do for months together in removing the thick deposit from the steps and digging out the shrines.

As you proceed northward, you cannot fail to notice large quantities of stone slabs, mostly from Chunar, lying piled in heaps or laden in boats in the river—intended for the erection of imposing buildings that beautify the city,—and they give you some idea of the commercial activity in this quarter. The long stairs of the MAN MANDIL GHAT (Plate II, 3) now appear with the walls of the structure above furnished with some remarkably fine oriel windows. Near to this are *Dalveswara* and *Someswara* Sivas, the former said to have influence over the rains and the latter famed for curing all manner of diseases.

Above the TRIPURA BHAIRABI GHAT lies the temple of the goddess of that name in a lane, and here is the quarter known as the *Brahmapuri*—a number of houses erected by the famous Rani Bhawani and dedicated to the use of the Brahmans of Benares.

Divodaseswara Siva

Then comes the MIR GHAT, in a house above which resided Mir Rustum Ali who was the Governor of the province before Bulwant Singh, the father of Raja Chet Singh. The temple of *Divodaseswara Siva* famed to have been established by Raja Divodas of old is in the lane above this ghat. It is a

small temple among a cluster of similar ones under the cool shade of spreading banyans. A very sacred well known as the *Dharma-Kup* enclosed by a high stone railing is in front of this temple in the centre of the courtyard, A few steps off from this is the temple of *Vishālākshi Devi*—an epithet of Parvati—finely sculptured above the entrance and famed to be standing on the place where Parvati's *Kundala* (ear-ornament) fell. For a slight to her divine spouse by her quondam father Daksha she had cast her life away, and the disconsolate Siva went roving all over the three worlds with her lifeless frame upon his shoulders. Vishnu cut it to pieces by his discus, and the various members, according to tradition, fell upon fifty-one places on earth that became sanctified as *pithas* or sacred spots ; and this in Benares is one of them. The image of the goddess is gorgeously decked, the floor is of black and white marble, and the ceiling and walls are painted and embellished with various decorations in bright colours. The building was enriched by a Chetty of Nathcote a few years ago, and the whole has a very opulent look. In an adjoining chamber of the same house with humbler decorations is the image of *Mahalaksmi*.

Vishalakshi Devi

Down the steps of Mir Ghat with some more shrines on the left—one of them being of Radha Krishna,—we pass by the LALITA GHAT. Above the

NAPALESE GHAT not far off, lies in a shady corner the picturesque *Nepalese temple* of *Pashupatinath Siva* with its two-storied roof and its gilded top and a pair of boldly executed lions near the entrance. It is a unique structure of its kind in Benares being made entirely of wood with profuse and elaborate carvings beautiful and bold, representing various gods and goddesses neatly sculptured in wood and other fine ornamentations executed to a nicety. But the effect is much marred by some unsightly and indelicate incongruities disfiguring some portions of them. In a recess just above the stairs of the ghat is the shrine of *Ganga*—the presiding deity of the river seated upon a crocodile (*makar*).

The Napalese Temple

We next come over to the JALASAIN GHAT, so called after Vishnu who reclines upon the water of the ocean whence the name *Jalasain.* It is used as a cremation-ground (Plate XII, 6), and is in fact the continuation of the famous *Manikarnika Ghat* where we have now arrived. This massive stone ghat as well as the two fine temples standing to the north and south were built by the famous Ahalya Bai. The high cremation-ground above made of stone and enclosed and protected by a stone wall has been recently constructed to avoid the difficulties of cremation during the rainy season when the water approaches its foundation and submerges the ground below.

Tarakeswara Siva

The fine temple of TARAKESWARA SIVA stands almost in the water in front of the ghat. During the rains the upper portion of it only is left to tower above the large expanse of the rolling water which strikes it on every side and isolates it as it were from the bank (Plate II, 1). It is believed that this god recites in the ears of the dying the *Mantra* (text) that gives salvation to the soul. The sincere belief in the Hindu world is that persons dying at Benares are freed from the liability of being born again and are merged in the God Siva. Hence it is that a large number of devout people from all parts of India flock to this place in their old age leaving home and family behind them and take up residence here with the object of passing the last days of their lives in this holy spot,—thus realising in a manner the *Banaprastha Asram* of old in a modified form in this age.

The Ahmety Temple

Towering above this ghat and reached by the steep steps leading into the street above is the spacious red-domed temple of *Balatripurasundari Devi*—a name of Durga—known as the AHMETY TEMPLE. This fine and artistic structure with gold-tipped pinnacles standing in the middle of a large and neat courtyard was built by the Raja of Ahmety in Oudh, and is strikingly

beautiful and will fully repay a visit. The most noticeable feature of this temple is the group of charming figures of the winged *Gandharvas* and *Apsaras*, the musicians of the gods, posed very gracefully in lines underneath the main cornice (Plate XI, 2). Near to it, further up, is the temple of *Siddhi Vinayak Ganesha* with the images of *Siddhi* and *Buddhi Devi* (Success and Wisdom) by its side.

Manikarnika Ghat

The MANIKARNIKA GHAT (Plate XII, 4) is the general cremation-ground of all Benares, and any time you may find half a dozen or more corpses blazing at the same time upon the wide steps near to the water's edge and being resolved into their primal elements. Numbers of *Sati Stones*—upright slabs placed in memory of the faithful wives who had followed their husbands even into death upon the funeral pyre—here bear witness to the Hindu ideal of love and life which even death cannot sunder.[1] A beautiful embodiment of

(1) To prove that the same spirit lives and controls the lives of the Hindus up to the present times, it may not be uninteresting to note the very latest case of **Sati** that occurred at premises No 9, Charakdanga Road, Belliaghata, Calcutta, on the 20th April 1911 in a highly-connected Kayastha family. The lady, Saibalini Dasi—a neice of the late Mr. R. C. Dutt (lately Commissioner of Burdwan and Orissa and Dewan of the Gaikwar of Baroda),—came to learn from the physician in attendance that her husband then lying in his mortal

this in the shape of a youthful couple carved very gracefully in relief on a large piece of Sati stone is to be observed near the *Harish Chandra* or *Mashan Ghat*, the cremation ground in the southern end of the town, besides the one on the street outside the temple of *Bara Ganesha.* A *Charan paduka* or Vishnu's foot-prints carved upon a white marble block rests over a black pedestal upon a large lotus-shaped slab of stone on the pavement. Vishnu has been reported to have alighted here and hence this spot is regarded to be of exceptional sanctity, and is especially reserved for the cremation of members of noble families.

Higher up above the flights of stairs is a rectangular well or tank famous as the MANIKARNIKA KUND, variously styled as *Mukti Kshetra* (the seat

illness had but a couple of hours at best to live. Just half an hour before his death she went upstairs, and having shut herself up in her roon dressed in her best and drenched her apparels with petroleum. Then, having set fire to her garments and being enveloped in violent flames and with a copy of "**Geeta**" held in her joined palms she approached towards her husband's room before anybody could be aware of what had transpired, but dropped down dead at the verandah before she could reach him. The two bodies were then cremated together upon the same funeral pyre on the bank of the sacred Ganges. This may be termed a determined felo-de-se or a temporary aberration of mind, but mark the inherent spirit that led to it !

Manikarnika Kund

of liberation) and *Purnasubhakaran* (complete source of felicity). It is enclosed by iron railings on all sides and stone stairs run from all its banks to the bottom, and all devout pilgrims usually bathe in it. Some images of gods and goddesses are in some of the niches by the side of the stairs, and this in the whole city is considered to be the most sacred spot which all pilgrims must visit, and hence the crowd here is always the thickest. Thus runs an inscription upon a white marble slab attached to the railings : "In 1887 A. D. the Jubilee year of Her Most Gracious Majesty, Victoria, Empress of India, was inaugurated the scheme for restoring the 'Ganges' at Benares to its native purity." During the rains the tank goes under water and barely a portion of the railings remain visible, near to which the people then bathe and perform their religious rites.

Thus it is that the Puranas ascribe to this Kund the greatest sanctity and antiquity :

Said Siva to Parvati,—'In the vast nothingness—no land, nor water, nor air, nor fire was there, nor night nor day, nor sound nor shape. Darkness was all around. And the great BRAHMAN, incomprehensible and unknowable, created *me* and vanished. His image am I, the God of the Simple, and they call me the ancient *Purusha*. Out of me did I bring thee forth, Mother of the Universe !'—Such

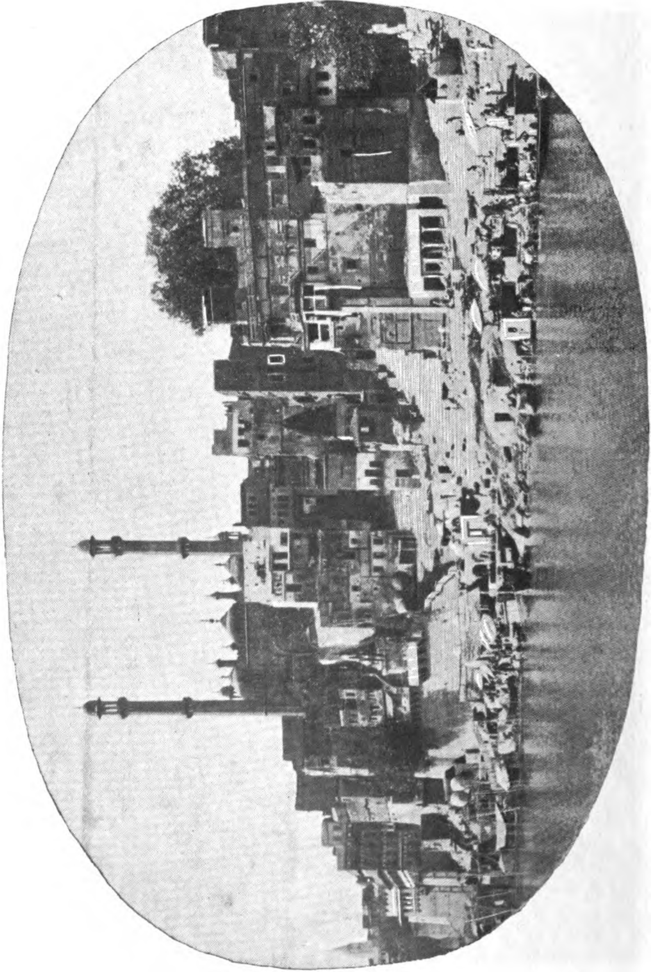
was the Hindu idea of the Supreme Essence, *Brahman*, the God of the gods, transcending all myth ascribed to popular Hinduism and all worship of images and deified heroes.—The expanse of five *cros* of space underneath his feet,—the episode proceeds,—Siva converted into the land of holy Kasi. It was set neither on earth, nor in the sky, but upon the top of Siva's trident; and as in the time of the deluge marking the change of cycles water overran the universe in one vast ocean, this spot ever continued to rest high above the rising flood. Siva and Parvati looked forward benignantly and out came a four-armed Being into existence. They named him *Maha-Vishnu*, and saying that the four Vedas would emanate from him for the guidance of all living beings they disappeared. Upon this, Vishnu excavated a tank with his discus and sat there for fifty thousand years in *tapa* (practice of austerities), and the heat generated by his arduous observances caused him to perspire profusely till the tank was filled. Siva came back attracted by his devotions and was highly pleased; and as he leaned forward to look into the tank a jewel (*mani*) pendent from his ear (*karna*) dropped into it. Hence arose the name *Manikarnika*. Later traditions add that goddess *Ganga* (Ganges) on her way to effect the deliverance of the ancestors of prince Bhagiratha was greatly impressed with its sanctity and entered this Kund, and thus enhanced its sacredness. This is one of the five most holy

places in Benares which all pilgrims ***must*** visit,—the other four being the *Asi-Sangam*, the *Dasaswamedh*, the *Panchganga* and the *Barana-Sangam* ghats,—the whole going by the name of *Pancha-Tirtha* (the five holy places of pilgrimage).

Scindhia Ghat

As you now advance northward you cannot fail to notice a sinking temple and a massive broken structure over the SCINDHIA GHAT (Plate V, 3). The huge stone pile leaning a long way out of the perpendicular looks exceedingly striking in the simplicity and beauty of its execution. The ruins of this noble edifice have the appearance of being torn from the very foundations and lie slanting towards the west. Baija Bai, the Gwalior Queen, began erecting the mansion and a ghat, but the heavy weight of the massive ***stone-work*** caused the foundations to sink, and the whole structure toppled over as if by a shock of violent earthquake. And thus have the ruins stood and kept their grounds to this day a hundred years, grand even as they are in the midst of the architectural grandeur all around. Thus runs a curious story noted by Mr. Neville as to the cause of the subsidence : In attempting to trace the source of a small stream of water that hampered the workmen, they opened a cavern where was discovered an old man. "The latter questioned them on current topics, such as recovery of Sita by Rama of Ayodhya, and on

PLATE XIIA



hearing of the events that had occurred during his long retirement and that Benares was in the hands of another race, he forthwith leaped into the Ganges and was seen no more."

The towering pile of the Raja of Nagpore's large building standing upon its steep stony foundation and crowning the BHONSLA GHAT appears next. The ghats after this are not of much importance till you reach the Panchaganga. So we pass rapidly by the SANKATA GHAT leading to the temple of the goddess of that name. GANGA-MEHAL GHAT, GHOSLA GHAT, RAM GHAT, BAJI RAO GHAT, and CHOR GHAT are passed by in succession. This last ghat is said to have been so called on account of its association with the adventures of a *chor* (thief) who used to come to bathe here at dead of night in the olden times presumably to wash away his sins. The Baji Rao and Ghosla Ghats are surmounted by two fine structures high above their precipitous stone-work, and the towering palatial building of the Maharaja of Gwalior look exceedingly grand and prominent (Plate XII, 3).

Panchaganga Ghat

Past the MUNGLA GAURI GHAT, we arrive at the PANCHAGANGA GHAT (Plate I), also known as the *Panchanada* or *Dharmanada Tirtha*, with its five stately flights of steps—a place of pilgrimage as the meeting-ground of the Ganges with

four of her tributaries, the *Dhutapapa*, the *Kirananadi*, the *Jamuna*, and the *Saraswati*, reputed to be flowing underground, no traces of which are, however to be found in this Iron Age.

Right upwards the stairs run into a narrow lane high above, and you come in front of what is known as MADHOJI-KI-DEORA, the Mosque of Aurangzeb,—also known as *Beni Madhav's Dhwaja* (ensign). As you enter the wide stone yard built high above the level of the neighbouring houses,

Madhoji-ki-Deora

the twin tall turrets look taller still and rise to a height of a hundred and fifty feet sheer above the floor and to nearly double that height from the bed of the Ganges. Bishop Heber notes in his Journal that according to common report, 'the Himalaya may be seen from the top of the minarets' in the morning when the sky is perfectly clear. It was at the latter end of the seventeenth or in the beginning of the eighteenth century that this mosque was erected with the best of the materials of the ruined temples upon the site of the old temple of Beni Madhav which was said to have been pulled down by Aurangzeb to make room for it; but it looks quite solid and strong still. It is said that the minarets were originally higher by fifty feet more and were latterly reduced to their present height to give them greater stability. A couple of persecuted lovers have been said to have stayed upon

one of the towers for a time and afterwards thrown themselves down to be freed from the pangs of despair.

You may now go inside and ascend by the spiral stairs of over a hundred and twenty steps till you reach one of the minarets above. As you come up to the topmost balcony of the minaret and emerge into light from out of the semi-darkness, a grand panorama of exceeding brilliance and beauty flashes upon your entranced vision (Plate X, 5). The sparkling waters of the holy river to the east seem to run below in a mighty curve extending towards the south till the chain of buildings and towers and temples fades away in a mist near the mouth of the Asi with the hazy outlines of the Ramnagar Fort discernible on the other bank of the Ganges. To the west are observed the well-wooded gardens and palatial mansions beyond the thickly populated quarters with their house-tops alive with sportive monkeys frisking about upon them and swarms of pigeons fluttering high above 'like clustering white lotuses floating in the heaven's blue.' The distant Dhamek and Humayun's Tower look clear-cut against the blue sky with their crests upraised above the neighbouring greenery. On the near north the river winds beneath the fine bridge looking rather slender and takes a mighty curve towards the east. The sight is really an enjoyable one, and upon

the dizzy height and 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,' you feel for the time eliminated as it were from all things mundane and resolved into a non-material entity!

Beni Madhab

Back to the earth down below,—to the west of the lane at the foot of the mosque, stands the present temple of *Beni Madhav* (a name of Krishna), also known as *Bindu Madhav* after the Rishi Agni Bindu who established the shrine. It also contains in another apartment *Panchagangeswara Siva* and the images of Ganga, and of Rama, Sita, Laksmana and Hanuman in white marble. A little further off through another lane you may have a look at the *Lasmanbala Temple* above the river containing a gorgeously decked image of the four-armed Vishnu holding the conch, the discus, the club and the lotus, with the discs of the sun and the moon on either side in their respective gold and silver colouring.

Lasmanbala Temple

As you step down the stairs of the Panchaganga Ghat on your return, you find a small house on the right containing among a number of images and emblems upon a stone platform what is reported to be the *Charan-Paduka* of RAMANAND the great Vaishnavite teacher who lived about the fourteenth century and set up the worship of Rama as the divine Vishnu. His residence was at Benares

at the Panchaganga Ghat where existed a *muth* or monastery of his followers said to have been destroyed by some of the Mussalman princes.

The plain white tapering pinnacles of some Jain temples next appear above the JAIN MANDIR GHAT, and passing the GAU GHAT with the figure of a colossal cow upon the steps, you arrive at the next ghat of importance, the TRILOCHAN GHAT where Vishnu is fabled to have offered one of his eyes in lieu of a blue lotus missing out of a thousand while he was engaged in worshipping Siva—who had thus an addition to his visual organ and became *Trilochan* or three-eyed. By the side of the steps in a small house are *Hiranyagarveswara* and *Narmadeswara* Sivas, and up above in a courtyard full of various images is the temple of *Trilochan Siva* with Parvati in front. In a niche upon the wall is an image of Ganesha in white marble, and in a room of a building in the same compound is *Baranasi Devi* established by King Banār. To the south of Trilochan is *Kotilingeswara*, so fashioned as to look like a cluster of numerous emblems in one, and a number of other images. Further off are the temples of *Nirbuddheswara* and *Adi-Mahadeo*, and in a dark room of a house in a lane is a well which is known as *Pilpilla Tirtha*, a name which is extended to the Trilochan ghat itself.

Trilochan Ghat

Back to the boat, we now glide by the TILLIANALA

and PRAHLAD GHATS and beneath the grand Dufferin Bridge at RAJ GHAT (Plate X, 4) —on the high bank above which was old King Banar's fort,—till we arrive at the northernmost point of our journey at BARANA-SANGAM, where the Barana streamlet empties itself into the Ganges. At this place too, it is said, once stood a small fort, traces of which are visible on close observation. The high bank on this side of the Barana with the moat-like streamlet at the foot makes it eminently fitted for a strong defensive position.

Barana-Sangam

The bank of the Ganges stretches northward plain and unencumbered with masonry save for a few small straggling houses afar, and then takes a majestic curve at the distance towards the east. As you step out of the boat and look northward, a sense of calm pervading restfulness fills your heart and makes you linger a while watching the pastoral loveliness of the locality. On the northern bank of the slender streamlet flowing from the west, beneath the shade of the large tree in the distance, lies a cow ruminating with legs doubled up and eyes half-closed while her tail keeps flapping at the flies and occasionally making a hit at the naughty crow as it hops about and attempts to settle upon her plump round belly. Close by strolls a playful heifer now browsing quietly, then frisking up to its dam in exuberance of spirits. The little dusky half-clad lad leaning against the tree-trunk has fallen asleep

with his stick lying by his side, forgetful of his charges grazing peacefully around. A small boat moored near the bank over there with a few clothes and bundles in it lies waiting for its owner; and up the stream farther off a matronly woman is engaged cleansing the family linen and is bending patiently down upon her work. The green shrubbery on the left lends a pleasant colouring to the charming scene so serenely calm and noiseless and peaceful. Presently there comes a lively dog yonder, dips its mouth in the water and laps it for a while, and turns round and scampers away in a hurry as if busy on some urgent errand, and reminds us that we too have our own business to mind.

So we turn back and observe up above the steep bank some temples erected by a Dewan of Maharaja Scindhia about a century and a half ago, which may be approached by some high stony stairs. The first, as you rise to the top is a small temple in which are *Nakshatreswara* and *Vedeswara* Sivas. In a recesss of the wall is an image of *Ganesha* and by its side a very beautifully carved small image of *Brahmā* with four faces seated upon a lotus—all in white marble. By the side of this temple is the entrance to the loftier one adjoining it. A large standing figure of Vishnu in shining black marble known as *Adi-Keshav* is in a room and in front of it is a spacious porch with a number of beautifully

Adi-Keshav

carved pillars supporting a lofty dome. There are some other temples too, clustering together there, the one of importance among them being that of *Sangameswara Siva.* In the quadrangle also is another image of Vishnu in Chunar stone in a standing posture styled the *Jnan Keshav.* As you come down, a number of *Sati* stones with figures in pairs carved upon them and set upright upon the grounds above the end of the creek on the Ganges side would be sure to attract your attention.

As you stand upon the eminence of this steep bank beneath the broad canopy of the blue heavens, with the slender Barana making for and at last reaching and nestling in the bosom of the mighty Ganges and the unified stream gliding along peacefully, with the vast expanse of the sun-lit vista stretching before you far as the eye can reach, what a strange undefinable impression of the grandeur of solitude fills the mind and makes it realise the solemnity of the scene !

(2)

Southward



IME enough, and now to return. Up the stream our boatmen ply and soon do we begin to trace our way back. A booming muffled sound makes you look ahead, and there goes a long-drawn railway train heralded by puffs of whitish smoke as it rolls over the Dufferin Bridge towards the Kasi Station. Below the bridge and past *Rajghat*, we move away from the bank and run up midstream to take from the distance a comprehensive view of the temples and turrets and ghats and palaces at a single sweep. *Trilochan* and *Gau Ghats* are soon passed; and up the high steps of *Pancha Ganga*, Aurangzeb's lofty mosque rears its head with its high minarets serving as landmarks for several miles around.

The white spires of the Jain temples set off against the blue sky and the lofty palace of the Nagpore Raja also move rapidly away. But soft, what is that small boat laden with a couple of

long stone slabs with something between and the whole tied round with heavy ropes? The five *Dandi* ascetics occupying the boat, presently raise it up with care and lay it across the edges of the boat, and then silently lower the whole down into the water below which eddies a little and then closes up. It is only the mortal remains of one of their associates in life which are thus consigned to a watery grave! Mother Ganges is capacious enough to hold all that seek refuge in her cold bosom. Such is death—a vanishing into the dark recesses of time! And life? Who knows? Perhaps but a child's play under its boding shadow!

Hard matter of fact would, however, brook no brooding. Look up, and there from the sloping bank above the *Ram Ghat* stares a gigantic mud figure of *Bhima*, the second of the Pāndava brothers, painted white and yellow, lying on its back under the open canopy of heaven with its head propped up and gazing towards the river with a pair of large dark eyes from beneath jet-black eyebrows and looking fierce and frightful enough in all conscience. Bhima is worshipped at the end of Kartik (November) when his image is made on the river-bank which lasts till the next rains dissolve it.

The stately ruins of the mighty piles slanting landward in the *Scindhia Ghat* (Plate V, 3) and lying in wild confusion still attract the eye by the grandeur of the massive stone-work and the beauty

of its architecture. The grand stairs and the lofty temples over the high embankments of the *Mani-Karnika*—the central one of all the ghats in Benares,—look trembling behind the filmy screen of smoke rising in wavy wreaths from the funeral pyres blazing upon the steps below. Disconsolate women with their hopeless eyes half turned away to avert the blaze and sitting with their pallid faces resting upon their knees, the crowd of bathers making their customary ablutions a little way off heedless of the solemn dissolution taking place so close at hand, and the motley groups of men and women passing by and casting awed looks toward the weird scene,—combine to make up an impressive sight that lives long in the memory.

From here to Dasāswamedh the whole bank is full of bathers resorting to it for ablutions and devotional purposes; and from morning till late in the afternoon large concourse of people always throng the bank employed in various pursuits. Down to Kedar Ghat the crowds continue, but beyond that point their ranks thin and melt away.

We leave the *Mir Ghat* and the lofty Man Mandil and drift on opposite the *Dasaswamedh Ghat* (Plate IV, 1) once more. In very old times it was styled the *Rudra Sarowar Tirtha*, but the name that now passes current is associated with Brahmā's Ten-horse Sacrifice performed here in the mythical ages. Temples cluster thicker over this bank than

elsewhere, and the largest numbers of bathers flock to this ghat for the observance of religious rites and duties. Constant bustle and motion along these ghats make the scene one of intense animation.

Scenes on the bank

But slow your boatmen must ply their oars if you would take in all the ever-changing kaleidoscopic variety of scenes shifting swiftly along the Ghat. Numbers of boats of diverse sizes and shapes painted green and yellow, and some of them looking roomy and commodious with pretty cane chairs and lounges placed upon their flat railed roofs lie moored all along the bank; and numerous similar crafts flit about and make the river lively with their brisk movements. Huge palm-leaf umbrellas with long bamboo-shafts stuck in the ground or tied to posts afford shelter from the scorching sun to various classes of people on the bank—beggars and barbers, priests and flower-sellers, ash-smeared *Sadhus* and devout lay-worshippers, and perhaps idlers as well like you and me. Under some of these sit the *ghatias* upon their broad wooden platforms to take care of the clothes and other belongings of the bathers and to supply them with oil and sandal paste and other toilet requisites for some little remuneration. No distinction of rank seems to stand in the way of the mixing up of this medley of men in these ghats; and you find the rich and the poor bathing side by side, and

the high-class Brahman in close proximity to the despised Sudra without the least fear of contamination (Plate XII, 5). From various parts of India far and near are they all there, males, females and children of all ages and all castes.

Look at the old men sitting upon the steps in their wet clothes reciting *mantras* and making offerings of flowers to the gods, which thrown into the water float away afar in a long trailing line down the placid stream. See how merrily are the youngsters over there talking and laughing and groups of females chatting incessantly—as is their wont all the world over—while bathing in a corner of the ghat (Plate XII, 2). Yonder are the frolicsome children swimming and splashing water in innocent glee caring little for the quiet their elders so badly want. In a retired corner a little way off are persons quietly offering libations of Ganges water to their dear departed ones and performing other rites enjoined in the *shastras* for their good in the world beyond, and making gifts and presents to Brahmans who are everywhere in evidence. Mark the man there immersed to his waist, standing with his palms joined and muttering hymns in a singsong tone half aloud and bowing often as he looks to the resplendent sun-god in all his glory in the east.

There goes a batch of pilgrims,—the grave-looking *pater-familias* leading, and the cheerful old dame

behind with a merry twinkle in her eyes that lights up her jocose rotund face dragging along a playful little urchin of a grandchild. With a wriggling restless little one pressed to her bosom by her encircling left arm decked with golden bracelets, a young mother comes along in the train of the old lady, clutching by the jewelled fingers of her right hand the fringe of her laughing sister-in-law's apparel and casting bashful looks of eager curiosity from beneath the half-drawn veil which shades her pretty little face. And those two young men—who bring up the rear and carry the vessel of the sacred Ganges water and votive offerings of green *bael* leaves, pink roses and yellow marigold,—must be brothers to all appearances. A guide—a *Jattrawallah* or *Gangaputra* (son of the Ganges), one of a class of Brahmans who earn their livelihood by this calling—directs their movements and points out to them the various sacred nooks and corners where they must pause to make an offering in the shape of small coins or *cowries* in the temples and shrines and to the swarm of pestering beggars and mendicant Brahmans hanging about every where.

Venerable old men fresh from a cleansing dip in the holy stream go along in their daily round of visits to the important shrines, clad in plain white with painted *namabali* sheets—stamped with the names of Rama and Hari and with the imprints of Vishnu's feet upon them—thrown round their

necks, and their foreheads and arms daubed with streaks of the sacred Ganges earth and sandalwood paste. Their teeth chatter with cold as they move along muttering snatches of *mantras* and sprinkling drops of sacred water from the *Kamandalus* (water-pots) in their hands upon the numerous emblems of Siva lying about their paths. Pathetic, very much, is the sight of that fragile withered old lady—perhaps a lonely widow the best part of her life—now bent double with age and almost in the last stage of decrepitude, plodding along wearily with the help of her trusty old stick, probably her only support in this world now, and shaking and shivering for the early morning bath. Verily, it was a sight like this that moved the poet as he wailed

'When one by one our ties are torn,
And friend from friend is snatch'd forlorn,
When man is left alone to mourn,
O, then, how sweet it is to die!

When the trembling limbs refuse their weight,
And films slow-gathering dim the sight,
When clouds obscure the mental light,
'Tis Nature's kindest boon to die!'

Longingly does she look up to that welcome liberation, and bears up still through the strength of her implicit faith in the virtue of the sacred water to effect her salvation and places her unswerving reliance upon the Great Lord to secure for her the boon of freedom from the interminable rounds of births and transmigrations should fortune be so favorably

disposed as to enable her to cast c er last breath in this holy city.

But we must not loiter much lor for we have yet to go a long way to reacl nagar and have, further, to go up above s of the southern ghats as well. So, leaving SITALA and AHALYA BAI'S GHATS behind, we by the MUNSHI GHAT erected by Munshi r, the architect of Ahalya Bai, and RANA with the palace standing above it of the raja of Udaipur who traces his descent from ma, the immortal hero of the Ramayana. Next comes the CHAUSATTI GHAT and up its flight of stairs is the temple of *Chausatti Devi* built by Bengal's last independent King, Maharaja Pratapaditya, towards the end of the sixteenth century. The image is a representation of *Durga* with her feet upon a crouching buffalo; and the stately figure of a lion, another present from Lal Bahadoor Singh, Raja of Ahmety, stands in the quadrangle. An image of *Bhadrakāli* is also in the same compound.

Chausatti Ghat

We leave PANDE and NARAD GHATS behind, and come next to the CHAUKI GHAT. Above it stands a lofty peepul tree near the trunk of which on the round stone pavement are numerous Siva emblems and figures of hooded serpents. We then float along by the KEDAR GHAT with its splendid stairs which in loftiness are next only to the ghat

above which stands Aurangzeb's towering mosque. At the top of this ghat is the large domed temple of *Kedarnath Siva* painted red and white. It stands amid four smaller ones, locating a large number of images of various gods and goddesses, among which are *Annapurna*, *Laksmi Narain*, *Ganesha* and *Bhaironath*. A tank called *Gouri Kund*, sacred to Siva's spouse, is at the top of the first flight of stairs. It is said that a Brahman of Oujjein named Vasishta had resolved to go on yearly pilgrimages to the temple of Kedarnath in the Himalayas as long as he lived. He did so sixty-one times, and though grown very old prepared to make a fresh start. Upon this Kedarnath became very propitious and manifesting himself to the Bramhan in a dream promised to stay in Benares for all time. Like *Gauri Kund*, *Hansa Tirtha* and *Ganga* in the Himalayas, all the three are represented here as well.

Kedarnath

Proceeding further up upon the bank on the right appears another figure of Bhima, and soon after this we reach the HARISH CHANDRA GHAT or MASHAN GHAT—the cremation-ground of the southern quarter of Benares. No flights of stairs or stone pavements mark the ghat here. Several *Sati* stones upon the bank in this place mark the spots hallowed by the self-immolation of disconsolate widows. This ghat is connected

Harish Chandra Ghat

with a thrilling incident and is famed to be the original cremation-ground of Benares, where in the Epic ages Raja Harish Chandra was engaged by the *Chandala* owner of the ghat to work as his servant. True to a promise he had made to Viswamitra to give whatever the Rishi desired to have, he made him a gift of all he had and vacated his kingdom at his bidding. Even this, however, would not satisfy the Rishi who demanded the customary *dakshina* or fee in money that a Brahman usually obtains as a concomitant to a gift of lands. Bereft of all world's material goods he had thus no other means left but to attempt to raise the requisite funds by selling his queen and his little prince into slavery to an old Brahman. Even this course failed to raise the adequate amount, and he had to sell his own self at last to the *Chandala* who owned this ghat and who employed him to collect rates from the people who came to burn their dead here. The home of the once happy and powerful king thus broken up by a freak of fortune for a plighted word, the unlucky King and his unhappy consort passed long years of suffering in strange places engaged in strange vocations. To add to his miseries, the story runs, it so happened that the little prince was bitten by a snake while plucking flowers for the old Brahman's devotional offerings. The poor mother brought down the body of her darling to this very ghat for cremation and lay wailing and disconsolate, with

the dead prince in her lap and the lurid flames of the burning pyres imparting a ghastly look to her wan and pallid face distorted by grief. From out of the night's sombre gloom rendered fearful by the ruddy half-lights, who should now emerge with his heavy rod but the erstwhile King and now a dirt-begrimed slave to claim the usual rate? A few brief minute's parley, a lifting of the mist of years and the assertion of the natural ties of blood,—and mutual recognition followed soon enough and the inevitable scene of heart-rending distress. Overwhelmed and blinded by grief, as man and wife were about to plunge themselves into the funeral pyre with their dead child, the sage Viswamitra appeared in the very nick of time and restored life to the prince and the queen and his kingdom to the King. Highly dramatic is this episode and thrilling with intense pathos as you find it narrated in the Ramayana. The large stone building above the ghat is pointed out as belonging to the descendants of that same Chandala, and a Siva emblem near the water's edge as established by Raja Harish Chandra.

Up a flight of high steps to the south above the HANUMAN GHAT stands the large image of the monkey-god near the entrance to the *Juna akhera*.

Ballabhacharya

This ghat is associated with the memory of BALLABHACHARYA, the founder of the Ballabhachari or the Rudra sect of the Vaishnavas. Born at Benares in

1479 A. D. of Brahman parents, he set up the worship of Krishna as Balgopal. It was a period of great religious activity all over India and Europe, and his contemporaries were Chaitanya (1484-1527) at Nadiya in Bengal and Nanak (1469-1539) in the Punjab, and the great reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) had also been then at work in Europe. He passed his last days at the Jethanwar quarter in Benares where he founded a *muth* and died in 1530. There is a legend connected with his death to the effect that he descended down the steps of this ghat into the water below and disappeared. Soon after this a flame of fire issued out of the spot where he had gone down which was seen ascending heavenward till it passed away into the blue sky above.

Close by is the DANDI GHAT (Plate X, 2) and beside it the SIVALA GHAT above which on the northern side are the two *muths* of the Naga Sannyasis, the *Nirvani* and the *Niranjani*. To the south of this is what is known as the *Sivala Fort* where Chet Singh, the Raja of Benares resided till 1781. It was built by Baijnath Misr, and the solid foundation rising out of the water erect and upright impart to it a look of considerable strength. The spacious grounds above now contain a small garden. Through a small window overlooking the river on the north Raja Chet Singh is said to have let

Sivala Fort

himself down into a boat below and crossed over to Ramnagar when he was beset by British troops under orders of Warren Hastings. [1] After this the fort was confiscated by the British Government and remained for many years in the occupation of the descendants of the Emperors of Delhi who were allowed to reside there. Only recently has this reverted to the present Maharaja of Benares. The houses in the outer and the zenana quarters on the south with five temples alongside the river as well as the old Dewan-khana further off, are all now in a sadly dilapidated condition. Their repairs had lately been taken in hand, and eleven temples with lofty pinnacles, standing together to the south of the Naga *Akheras* and utilized by the Mahomedans as store-houses,—have now been restored to their former condition.

Tulsi Das

A little to the south is the TULSI GHAT named after the great poet Tulsi Das, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare and was reputed to have lived in a house above this ghat for a long time. Here it was that he wrote his Hindi version of the *Ramayana* in 1574 A. D. His father Bhanu Datta was a Kanouj Brahman, and he was born about 1533 at a village in the Banda district called Rajapur lying to the west of Prayag ; some, however, assign his birth-place

(1) See Chap. X, post

to Tari in the Doab.[1] He lost his father when very young and was brought up by an ascetic, and stayed for about twelve years at Benares engaged in study. After this he returned home and married and settled there. Report has it that he had grown so inordinately fond of his wife that he could not bear separation from her for any lengthy period of time. In course of his temporary absence from home on one occasion, she had gone to her father's house on a visit. Apprised of this upon his return, he bent his steps thither; but when he accosted his wife, the latter felt much ashamed and annoyed at being followed about that way and pointed out that the highest and the purest bliss should have been his if he had but diverted that same love, that he bore for her transitory frame of flesh and blood, towards the divine Rama the Lord of the three worlds. This rebuff had a chastening effect and cooled the ardour of his love and made him relinquish the world and turn an ascetic. He came away to Benares and travelled to Ajodhya, where according

(1) Prof. H. H. Wilson in his '**Religious Sects of the Hindus**' notes: Tulsi Das was a Brahman of the Sarvarya branch and a native of Hajipur, near Chitrakut; when arrived at maturity he settled at Benares, and held the office of Dewan to the Raja of that city; his preceptor was Jagannath Das, whom he followed to Govardhan near Brindaban, but afterwards returned to Benares and there commenced his Hindi version of the Ramayana in the year of Samvat 1631, when he was thirty-one years of age. He continued to reside at Benares where he built a temple to Sita Ram, and founded a **muth** adjoining, both of which are still in existence (1861).

to some he published his *Ramayana.* After staying there for a time he came back to Benares and lived there till his death in 1623. His immortal work has a place in every Hindi-speaking household in the North-West, like Kirtibash's Ramayana in Bengal and Sridhar's Marhatta version of the same in Western India, and is a source of solace and a guide in shaping the course of daily life to the high and the low, to the rich and the poor, and to the *grihastha* who sticks to his home as well as the *Sannyasi* who has renounced the world.

In a small low-roofed room on the upper story of an old building above the river are carefully preserved a pair of sandals said to have been worn by Tulsi Das and a piece of rotten wood said to be a part of the boat by which he used to cross the river and an old quilted bedding pointed out as the one on which he used to sleep. As to the antiquity claimed for these relics, however, it is hard to form any estimate. In another apartment is the image of Hanuman said to be the identical one he worshipped ; and a small space upon the floor where lies a black stone slab with lines of letters carved upon it is pointed out as the very spot where he had composed his Ramayana. There are also several images here along with those of Rama, Laksmana and Sita.

The *Tulsi Ghat* is also associated with the memory of many of *Chaitanya's* followers who

had their abode here. Chaitanya also lived at Benares for a time where he had his religious and philosophical disputations with Prakāsānand Saraswati, the greatest of the Benares Pandits of the time, and defeated him.

Asi-Sangam

We now arrive at the last of the bathing places—the ASI-SANGAM—where that small streamlet empties itself into the Ganges. After achieving her victory over the demons Sumbha and Nishumbha, Goddess Durga is said to have thrown her sword (*asi*) away and it fell here and carved out the Asi channel. Here ends in a manner the holy limits of Benares and beyond this to the south there are no more ghats and stone revetments of the bank or temples and shrines any further.

Panchkoshi Road

Having thus far seen the holy shrines and ghats in Benares we may—as our boat heads slowly towards Ramnagar—talk about one more and a rather arduous duty the pilgrim has to perform, viz., to walk along the PANCHKOSHI ROAD enclosing the sacred precincts of Benares on the land side,—starting from Manikarnika Ghat as the centre and going round at a distance of five *cros* or ten miles from it. This road was repaired by Rani Bhawani who had erected the Durga Temple; but portions of it and many of the temples and tanks lying along it lately fell into very bad condition again.

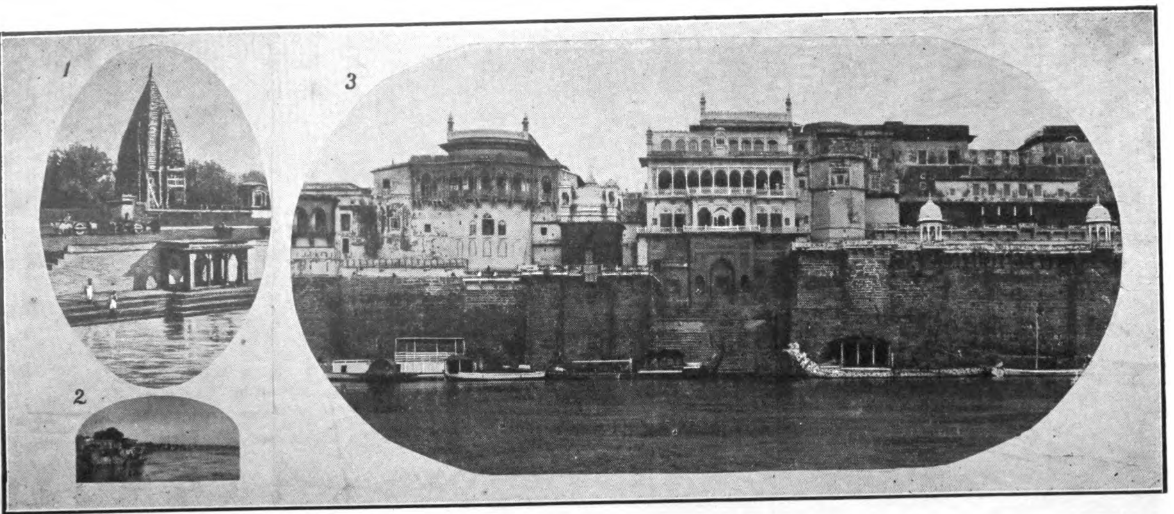
It may not be out of place to mention in this connection that through the exertions of an old Brahman of Benares named Pandit Dwarkanath Dubê, a thin wiry old man of great earnestness and energy, a committee has been formed under the name of "*Kashi Tirtha Jirnoddharini Sabha*" for the repair and restoration of old *Tirthas* or places of pilgrimage at Benares. The committee have succeeded in making improvements to the Panchkoshi Road repairing the bridges along the same and making provision for street-lights at Bhimchandi, Rameswara, and other places, and also by cleansing and restoring the Gandharba Sagar tank at Bhimchandi and a well near the temple at Rameswara. The old temples of Adi-Mahadeo, Nirbuddeswara, and Kameswara near the Trilochan Ghat and also of Briddha-kaleswara and Daksheswara in the interior were also repaired by some *reises* of Benares through the persuasions of the committee. In respect of these repairs and restoration of old temples and resuscitation of old shrines, Dwarkanath has merely been following in the footsteps of a Guzrati Brahman named Pandit Ramkrishnaji Dichchhit Gorji whose disciple he professes to be. Even before Pandit Gorji, two Bengal Brahmans, Pandit Ram Chandra Vidyalankara and his son Pandit Uma Sankar Tarkalankara, had taken the initiative in the matter and set the movement afoot and had done much in this direction.

From the Manikarnika Kund, the road runs,

along the ghats southward towards the Asi-Sangam and thence passes towards the west and the north, through a wide and wonderfully picturesque and delightful area in the interior. It has five halting stages—the first being near the temple of Kardameswara Siva in the village of Khandwa said to be of very great antiquity, the next near the temple of Bhimchandi Devi in the village of Dhupchandi, the third at Rameswara, the fourth near the Panch Pandava tank in the village of Shibpur and the fifth near the Kapildhāra tank to the south of the Barana. This takes the pilgrim five days, and on the sixth he comes back to Manikarnika *via* Barana-Sangam having covered a space no less than fifty miles in length. Circumambulating thus round the whole of the holy area with all its numerous shrines and sacred places, one is said to acquire in a compendious form all the merits and benefits to be obtained from visiting each of them individually.



PLATE XIII



1. Durga Temple, Ramnagar. 2. View northward from Sivala Fort.
3 Ramnagar Fort and Palace.

Chapter X

RAMNAGAR

"There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

—Shakespeare.



ETWEEN green banks rich with fertility flows the vast sheet of water. About a mile off to the left now appear the massive buttresses and the rounded walls and thick battlements of the Ramnagar Fort (Plate XIII, 3), solid and strong and rising straight out of the water; and fine windows and stately balconies above overlook the river and have a look of quiet and peaceful opulence. Important as the residence of the present Maharaja, the traditions of whose family is said to relate to the eleventh century A. D., it is also closely connected with the history of Benares. It was MANSA RAM, the head of the Bhuinhars and Zemindar of Gangapur—a village ten miles west of Benares—who was the real founder of the greatness of the Raj family and the architect of its fortunes. The great Mogul Moon had been waning after the death of Aurangzeb, and the Nawabs of Oudh began to gather strength during the effete regime of his mediocre successors.

Mansa Ram

Thus it was, as has been traced before [1] that in 1722 the Benares province came to the hands of Saadat Khan, the first Nawab of Oudh. It was then sublet by him to Mir Rustom Ali who governed it till 1738. Mansa Ram took service with him and gradually drew the reins of government into his own hands, and after the expulsion of the former in 1738, he was, according to Dr. Hunter, allowed to step into Rustom Ali's place. He made his possessions secure and in course of time acquired the Fort of Jaunpur and obtained the grant of Chunar and Benares for his son Bulwant Singh and secured for him the title of Raja. According to another authority, however, Emperor Mahammad Shah of Delhi being willing to place Benares in the hands of the Hindus made Mansa Ram Raja of Benares in 1730.

Bulwant Singh

Upon the death of Mansa Ram in 1739, his son BULWANT SINGH succeeded and strengthened his position by erecting this Fort at Ramnagar; and in spite of the attempts of Nawabs Safdar Jung and Shujauddowlah to bring him under control, he made himself practically independent of the Nawabs of Oudh, and further added Chakia to his patrimony in 1754 and obtained Korh as a Jagir from Nawab Shujauddowlah. Later on in 1763, he joined the Emperor Shah Alam of Delhi in his

(1) Vide p. 134, ante.

expedition against Mir Jafar, the Nawab of Bengal, the former being backed by Nawab Shujauddowlah and the latter by the British. Then was fought the momentous battle of Buxar in 1764, and after the defeat of the Emperor Bulwant coolly went over to the side of the conquering British. In 1764 Emperor Shah Alam ceded the Benares district to the English, but under the terms of a subsequent treaty in 1766 with Nawab Shujauddowlah it reverted to the hands of the Wazirs of Oudh. Owing to the support of the English, however, Bulwant's possessions could not be interfered with by the Wazir.

Chet Singh

On his death in 1770, CHET SINGH, son of Bulwant by a Rajput lady, succeeded; and the Wazir of Oudh having eventually ceded the province of Benares back to the British in 1775, the Government of John Company confirmed him in his place in 1776. He could not, however, pull on well with Warren Hastings who was hard pressed for men and money owing to the wars with the Marhattas and with Haidar Ali in Mysore. Complications arose, and in 1778 he was called upon to pay for the maintenance of three battalions of Sepoys and in 1780 to make additional payments for cavalry for general service of the State. For a time Chet Singh complied, but held back afterwards. At last in 1781, matters came to a head when he was

called upon to pay the sum of five lakhs of Rupees for failing to furnish a thousand horsemen to fight with the French. As he would not do so, Hastings came over to Benares and took up his quarters at Madhudas's garden [1] and asked him to explain his conduct. As his attitude did not impress him favorably he issued orders for placing the Raja under arrest in his own residence at the Sivala Fort, and two companies of sepoys under three British officers were detailed off to mount guard there. They went, but by some mistake without ammunitions, and took their stand on the small square to the west of the eleven temples still existing in the fort. A number of the Raja's retainers who had been apprised of the circumstances, now crossed over from Ramnagar and put all of them—two hundred and five all told—to the sword; and during the *melee* the Raja escaped by lowering himself down by means of some turbans tied together into a boat below from one of the five windows in the fort lying above the river on the north side.

This was in 1781; and at a little distance to the west of the Sivala Fort, in a quarter inhabited mostly by Mahomedans now, is a rectangular platform raised above the level of the adjoining road and enclosed by a railing, inside which are three plain white tombs with a brass tablet recording thus:

"This tablet has been erected by the Govt.

(1) Vide p. 52, ante.

of the N. W. P. to preserve the last earthly resting place of Lieut. Arch: Scot, 1st Battalion Sepoys; Jer: Symes 2nd................J. Stalker, Resid: Body-guard who were killed August 17, 1781 near this spot doing their duty."

Far from the scene of the carnage, however, and near the Chetgunge Police Station and next to the fine large garden-house of Hon. Munshi Madho Lal at Benares is the place where the remains of the Sepoys were buried which was later on enclosed by a wall built in 1862. An inscription upon a slab outside marks the spot as '*the burial place of brave men who died in the performance of their duty.*'

An attack upon Fort Ramnagar followed this and was repulsed costing the life of Captain Mahaffre who led it. Chet Singh now prepared to take up the offensive and attack Hastings in his quarters at Madhudass' garden at Benares, but the latter thought it prudent to make a hasty retreat to the strong fort at Chunar. [1] Chet Singh then raised an army of over twenty thousand regular troops besides about the same number of irregulars, but he was eventually turned out of his strongholds and had to flee to Gwalior where he ended his days in 1810. He was formally deposed and MAHIP NARAIN, son of Bulwant Singh's daughter Golap Kumari was placed on the throne in September

(1) Vide p. 52, ante.

1781. Since then till now the succession has been unbroken and it has all along been a piping time of peace and prosperity. His son UDIT NARAIN succeeded in 1795 and was in his turn followed by his son ISWARI PRASAD in 1835.

Mahip Narain

It was during Raja Mahip Narain's regime that the Civil and Criminal Administration of Benares and the Criminal Administration of the province were taken away by the British into their own hands. In 1794 the lands held by the Raja in his own right were constituted into his *Family Domains* with his own courts for the trial of civil and revenue cases cropping up therein. The present Maharaja H. H. SIR PRABHU NARAIN SINGH, G. C. I. E., who succeeded in 1889, has lately been the recipient of signal honors from the government of Lord Minto, having been invested with the full administrative powers and dignity of a *Ruling Chief* in respect to the perganas Bhadohi and Kera Mangraur of his Family Domains as well as the tract comprising the Fort of Ramnagar and its appurtenances which are now to be termed the STATE OF BENARES. A profound scholar in Sanskrit and a patron of learning, the Maharaja is one of the principal benefactors of the Central Hindu College. His works of charity are various and extensive, and he

Administration

Prabhu Narain

enjoys a wide and well-deserved popularity.

From the landing stage, you come to the front of the lofty gate leading to the spacious courtyard of the Maharaja's Fort and Palace.

Ramnagar Fort The two large courts inside the walls are capacious enough to accomodate a vast concourse of people, and thousands had in fact stood here in martial array and sallied out hence in their offensive errand to fight their foes. The whole locality, however, now wears a lively appearance, when, on the auspicious tenth day of the waxing moon during the Ram Nabami festival in autumn every year, the Maharaja goes out in procession to proceed to Chitrakut, about a couple of miles off, to witness the *Bharat Milan*, the meeting of Bharat with his exiled brother Rama—that great dramatic event depicted by the immortal Valmiki and so full of intense human interest and pathos. The front-gate of the fort is then blocked with crowds of people mixed up with the Maharaja's guards pouring out of the Fort in an incessant stream. Dense expectant throngs line the broad pathway, and mounted sentries here and there make but feeble attempts to keep up a semblance of order. The whole of Ramnagar clad in holiday attire, and a good portion of Benares too, turn out here at the time; and as they press and jostle to have a peep at the front, pleasant jokes and good-humoured witticisms flit along and keep the company merry,

Presently, there is an unusual stir and the gorgeous cavalcade advances. A party of horsemen with pennoned lances strut by upon their prancing chargers, a line of richly-caparisoned elephants with their swaying trunks and broad foreheads painted white and vermilion wave onward in their measured gait, and troops in red uniforms and with tall matchlocks follow them on foot. Beautiful gold and silver *tanjams* upholstered in crimson velvet and other paraphernalia of royalty are carried along, couples of horsemen in quaint old-time coat of mail and iron helmet of the olden days pass by and evoke admiring comments from the merry-makers ; large parties of horsemen in modern uniform and armed with carbines now appear and solid phalanxes of men on foot fully accoutred and furnished with present-day weapons. Soon enough the princes come forth, tall and slim and fine youths, riding gracefully upon their high-mettled steeds. Stately elephants with necklaces of gold and silver and coverings of cloths of gold bear gold and silver howdahs of various artistic designs seating the Dewan and the high officers of State. Soon as the Maharaja's elephant passes out of the gate the crowds grow exultant and vociferate shouts of welcome, cannon thunder forth the salute, the Maharaja nods and bows gracefully, the attendant behind his throne of silver waves the white *chamara* in his hand and the pearly fringes of the broad glistening white silver umbrella overhead rock and quiver and look

extremely picturesque. In his robes of spotless shining white silk, with his jewelled necklace decking his breast, the Maharaja looks on the other side of fifty with a fine physique and a kind benevolent mien and dignified bearing. Other elephants follow and some more troops and attendants, and a large multitude of various grades of men bring the show to an end. Onward the procession moves, the crowds wait a while and then disperse.

Shall we now have a peep at the stately palace? We must then cross the courtyards and go in. The main hall inside is bright with the shooting brilliance from the pendants of the beautiful crystal chandeliers emitting rainbow colours on the least motion. The floor is inlaid with fine trellis-work of dainty marble, and rare art curios and various knick-nacks adorn the tables. An interesting series of large portraits in oil colours of the Rajas of the Benares family decorate the walls, and prominent among them look those of Rajas Chet Singh, Mahip Narain, Udit Narain, Iswari Prasad and the present Maharaja. Raja Iswari Prasad Singh was reputed to be a poet and an artist of a very high order and much of his fine handiwork are preserved in the palace, and among them are some dainty flowers in ivory placed underneath the glass-cases upon the side-tables. There is a room adjoining the hall, the four walls of which as well as the ceiling are literally covered over with scenes in

colours from Kalidasa's glorious drama *Sakuntala*. Indeed, the whole history of her charming life is to be observed here depicted in beautiful paint and is well worth the trouble of studying. One very interesting treasure in the palace is an old hand-painted and gorgeously illuminated copy of *Tulsi Das's Ramayana* with profuse illustrations—which can be viewed only with the Maharaja's permission.

As you stroll along the verandahs and stand upon the balcony facing the river, you catch a glimpse of the stately structures of the Benares bank in the distance, and a fine vista of unusual beauty opens up before your absorbed vision with the crystal waters rolling on in a mighty sweep and set against the luxuriant green of the broad eastern bank. As the horizontal rays of the afternoon sun tinge the white walls of the palace with the hue of pale vermilion, it is pleasant to watch and take a retrospect of what had once been and reflect upon the significance of the past over the present.

In one part of the fort in a small shrine facing the river and just above it is the white marble image of the four-armed river-goddess *Ganga Devi*, the presiding deity of the Ganges, seated upon a crocodile—a beautiful image with a fine expression upon the face. There are other shrines in the fort, but the main object of interest is the temple of *Veda Vyasa* containing an emblem known as

Vyaseswara Siva said to have been established by Vyasa, which people from distant parts come to visit.

Janakpur and Girijaya Temples

Coming out of the fort and striking into the interior you pass by the side of a lofty gateway along a broad path fringed with shady trees, and drop in to see the JANAKPUR TEMPLE containing beautiful images of Rama and his three brothers and their spouses, all in white marble, and also the GIRIJAYA TEMPLE with the image of *Durga* and a *Siva* emblem inside and a stone lion at the entrance,—both of them in the middle of cool shady spacious groves.

Temple of Durga

Next comes the very best place in Ramnagar which makes it worth while coming so far from the blessed city of Benares and which makes full amends for all the troubles you have taken. Something over a mile from the Maharaja's palace is the TEMPLE OF DURGA with the fine tank in front and the garden adjoining it (Plate XIII, 1). Far from the clamour and bustle of the city, an atmosphere of calm repose and serenity seems to pervade this sequestered nook and breathes a sense of peace and contentment into the heart; and the quiet environments make you feel as if you have nothing else to desire for and can smoothly

sleep the rest of your life away here immersed in a pleasant dream.

Just as you enter the temple compound, your eyes light upon a beautiful little white figure of *Kamalā Devi* (one of the ten Mahavidyas) seated on a lotus-bed with an elephant on either side bathing her by jets of glistening water issuing out of its trunk—all in white, the symbol of purity. Beyond this is the lofty temple, a hundred feet high, with its floor and verandahs upon a high terrace. The principal figure inside the temple is the marble image of *Durga* covered all over with gold and wearing a yellow scarf. On the left is Saraswati seated upon a goose in white marble, and on the right Radha and Krishna. In front of the main entrance lies a winged lion, and facing the two side-doors are the figures of *Garuḍa* and *Nandi*.

The temple is said to have been built by Raja Chet Singh nearly a century and a quarter ago, and the spire worked with modern floral designs have been added much later and completed only about 1850. Over a hundred niches grouped in five rows decorate the four walls outside and hold neatly executed bas-reliefs of mythical gods and goddesses sculptured in Chunar sandstone in every one of them. A line of little birds nestle upon the edges of the roof, beak to beak, and many of the godheads of the Hindu pantheon are there with their exploits depicted in stone too numerous

to mention. In addition to Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva, and Rama, Sita and Hanuman usually to be seen, there are also Indra, Surya, Agni, Vayu and the thousand-armed Kartavirjyārjuna. The figures of Krishna holding Govardhan and of the ten-armed Durga are very striking. The style of architecture is a blending of the genuine old Indian and the comparatively modern art and has a very pleasing effect. Isolated by its position from all other architectural piles and situated in a spacious green lawn in this retired quarter and fanned by the gentle breath of the evening breeze coming through the neighbouring groves, this grand temple in its faint yellow tint looks exceedingly picturesque in its solitary grandeur and stands out in bold relief against the blue background of the distant sky with its lofty pinnacle and graceful sculptures mirrored in the clear water of the lovely tank in front (Plate XIII, 1).

Maharaja's Garden

Close to the temple lies the Maharaja's beautiful garden with an entrance from the road and a large mansion at each end of the two pathways crossing each other in the middle. Just over the crossing in the centre is a nice open marble resting-hall with a beautiful roof fashioned like a canopy and supported upon chastely carved pillars,—all of delicate white marble from the roof to the floor and a masterpiece of tasteful design. The garden

itself has also been nicely laid out on either side of the pathways and is exquisitely beautiful and pleasing in its effect, and the whole has a look of neatness and refinement not frequently to be met with. At some distance from this is a temple of Siva, a place of pilgrimage to the devout, and some retreats of Sannyasis as well.

Work enough perhaps for a hasty visit. The sun has now set behind the distant greenery and the ruddy glow has disappeared. The shades of evening are gathering fast, and there is a hard conflict between the thick veil of darkness descending to envelop the earth and the pale but brightening glimmer of the rising moon attempting to lift it up. Even thus between light and darkness in conflict does the world hold on its course towards eternity. The outlook grows dim and hazy, and it is now time to return.

Night on the River

So, after a brief rest for a while we come back to the river-bank and rouse up our boatman from his evening nap. Though our boat plies through a dense fog shutting out the face of the moon and reducing it to a hazy glamour of dirty yellow, and though the lights on the other bank as we approach it peep faintly with a misty halo round each of them, still can we picture to ourselves the splendour of the resplendent orb shining in all its glory overhead with its silvery sheen playing upon

the ripples of the greenish water rolling in waving sheets of emerald and bathing the great crescent of the Benares bank in a splendour of bluish-white brightness, with its towers and temples and spires silhoutted in the distance against the pale blue sky,—conjuring up before the mind's eye a fairy-land of dream nestled in the sweet strains of *nahabat* music wafted from the distant temples and encased in the illumined fringe of lights on the western bank that have been amplified into flashing gems and brilliants in the reflections below—as if the stream had borrowed the glittering stars from heaven to heighten the effect !

A night's quiet and well-earned rest amid pleasant dreams and gladsome visions ; and in the morn following we take a stroll through the *Sikrole* quarter to have a look at the courts and other public buildings, the Chapels and the Cemetery, the Bank and the Old Mint and the hotels—Clarke's and Hotel de Paris—which, pretty in their own way, are, however, of the usual type to be seen in most Indian civil stations of the modern times, the only place of interest here being the *Nadesar House*—noticed before [1]—belonging to the Maharaja of Benares.

This brings our delightful tour to a close. *Our Guide*, a jolly old gentleman—a pensioned veteran

(1) See p. 54, ante.

of His Majesty's Royal Mail—who combines in him the old lore with a sprinkling of the modern, and to whom we are thankful for our hurried experiences, tells us that there are very many things in Benares to be seen and enjoyed and thought over, for it is not for nothing that this sacred city has been famous as the home of Indian wisdom and learning from the very earliest of ages and earned the well-deserved name of '*the Athens of the East*'. He urges us to make a more intimate acquaintance with the holy city. But time at our disposal hardly allows that. He adds he had anticipated this and his object in showing us round in the way he did was to give us some idea of Benares that should interest us whether we were religiously bent or were mere curious sight-seers like so many other sinful mortals that frequent this holy place.

Our Guide

Our rambles now over, we come to a halt at the CANTONMENT STATION. Shrill whistles the parting signal, and puffing and heaving the iron horse approaches, and emits a prolonged sigh. All enjoyments have an end and all pleasure, and here we must now part and put a period to our sojourn!

Farewell, Holy City! Long will the few brief hours of fleeting time passed in thy fostering bosom linger in the mind as a pleasant memory; and in the solitude of coming days will fancy often call up the flimsy fabrics of a fascinating dream woven with the soft impressions of thy variegated scenes. Full as is thy large expanse covered over with the ancient shrines of olden times, the towering temples of the middle ages and the splendid present-day palaces and charming gardens replete with all the comforts the hand-maids of modern civilization could invent and furnish,—it is pleasant still to contemplate the times when, three thousand years ago, the revered *Aryas* found thee clothed with the verdant green of thy pristine forests luxuriating in the fertility of the tri-fold streams, and looked entranced upon thy wavy eastern limb laved by the holy Ganges, that had travelled all the way from the snowy heights of Gangotri where she had descended to bring salvation to the doors of all sinners who believed. In the dim twilight of the early dawn, as the bright and revered *Rishis* sat lining the silent bank near the river's edge absorbed in the contemplation of the Supreme, after their sanctifying ablutions in the sacred stream, —how charming did the lovely *Usha* [1] look in

(1) Dawn

her roseate robe of subdued brightness as she chased the fast receding gloom to usher in the glorious *Savita* [1]; and what a day was it that dawned when they hailed the darting rays of the rising sun—just resuscitating as it were thy wondrous crescent—with the welcome chant of the choral hymns in their grand and sonorous voices to which the sounding conches added a solemn grandeur! And as the dazzling noon approached, how thick the smoke from the circling *homa* [2] fires—lit underneath the spreading branches of the giant forest-trees—twirled upwards in wavy wreaths and made the air redolent with the sanctified perfume of the burning *habih* [3] and suffused the surroundings of their peaceful hermitages with an incense of holiness and purity! And when the pale twilight on the west had merged into the heavenly blue and King Soma [4] shone forth in his glory of soothing white with myriads of his twinkling retinue peeping slyly from the azure above, what a music it was that floated in the air as the joyous notes of the *Sama Veda* hymns rose up in a chorus of praise and adoration in their full manly sonorous voices which the answering echo sweetened and mollified by contact with the smooth water below! ———Skipping over a few scores of *Yugas*, [5]—

(1) The Sun. (2) Sacrificial fire.
(3) Clarified butter. (4) The Moon.
(5) Yuga—a cycle of twelve years.

in the ages of mythology and poetry, the primeval monarchs of thy forests had glided out of existence and made room for the populous city of lofty mansions and stately palaces; music and all the fine arts patronised by royalty now flourished, and sages added their wisdom and learning to the store-house of human knowledge. Kshatriya kings in all their pomp and glory scoured the country around in war and peace with their gorgeous following of gaily-caparisoned horses, stately elephants and well-decked chariots, and of men armed with swords and bows and arrows, with flags and pennons flying, the *turya's* [1] shrill call mixing with the booming of the *bheris*, [2] and conches and horns blowing martial music. After the victorious horse had returned from its tours what a brilliant array of Kings and Princes, of deified Saints and god-like men thronged thy holy bank to witness the performance of the great *Aswamedha* and the bestowal of munificent gifts of horses and elephants, of gold and even kingdoms by the bounteous Kings! Oft were such scenes repeated and various were the occasions.————Allow a few centuries to glide by,—the pomp and splendour and the glory and poetry of the earlier ages lad grown dim, speculations in religion and philosophy had given rise to various sects and varied observances and brought in a host of complications, paving thus

(1) Wind instruments. (2) Drums.

the way for the acceptance of the simpler rules of life preached by the saintly Gautama in the light of *Nirvana* and Universal Love. Calm and placid and serene sat the Great Master under the vast canopy of thy heaven's blue with thy king and princes and all the royal court grouped around with palms joined and heads bent in meek humility and listening to the words of wisdom that fell from his lips like the welcome drops upon the thirsty earth below. And often in after-days in similar assemblies would the reverant hush of the listeners break into the thrilling musical chorus—" I take shelter under *Buddha*, I take shelter under the *Dhamma*, I take shelter under the *Sangha !*"——— Five more centuries flitted away,—the new light had expanded and had shed its effulgence far and wide and much beyond thy distant horizons. Then came the wane and a re-assertion of the older faith. Monarchs owing allegiance to either creed held alternate sway, and architectural embellishments of stately monasteries and lofty temples upon which kings and princes lavished riches untold enhanced the loveliness of thy beauteous frame ; and votaries from far off climes made pilgrimages to thy hallowed grounds.———Eight centuries thus lost themselves in the womb of eternity,—thick gloom now began to envelop the land and all animation seemed suspended as it were by some mysterious agency ; religion, myth, philosophy got hopelessly jumbled together ; and though temples

and shrines abounded, the real fervour of life lay well-nigh smothered and crushed underneath the grotesqueness of the elaborate rites and vapid ceremonials that had sprung up and clustered round the bare exterior. Then shone out that youthful luminary upon thy firmament, the great Sankara, who rooted out the weeds from amidst the tangled growth and brought order out of chaos, and the tide of life flowed back rejuvenated and vigourous under his reformed and regenerated doctrines leading again to the contemplation of the Perennial Source, the Supreme in all his manifestations pervading the Universe—culminating in the grand realisation of *So'ham* (I am He)!———Again the heavens lowered,—again had degeneration crept in apace with the strange creations of the Pauranic fancies, and decadence in religion led to the inevitable decay in national life. Kings fell at the advance of the victorious Crescent, and in the half a dozen centuries or more that followed, the glare of the blazing torches of persecution revealed thy temples tottering to ruins and the rounded domes of the uprising mosques rearing themselves on high to the accompaniment of the deafening notes of '*Din*', '*Din*'!———Occasional resuscitations followed; and all the vicissitudes of conflicting ages notwithstanding, thy supremacy as the greatest stronghold of Hinduism—regained in Sankara's time—held on its ground unassailed, and the Moslem onslaughts were felt but as a passing scratch.———The rest was but

the other day.———‘Heaven lends a thousand differing ways to one sure end;’ and various as are the world’s prevailing creeds, like numberless paths, straight or tortuous, they all converge and lead *the devout* and *the sincere* to the shade of the same market-place of Salvation where sits the Glory above the overspreading greenery! As a prominent landmark in one such path, may thou be long the meeting-ground of all ages of eternal time and the ideal city of holiness in the East and a repository of all that is great and noble and sublime pulsating with the throb of thy ancient greatness, and be a soothing abode of rest and peace to the devout as heretofore, after the toils and turmoils of life at its closing days!—Farewell!



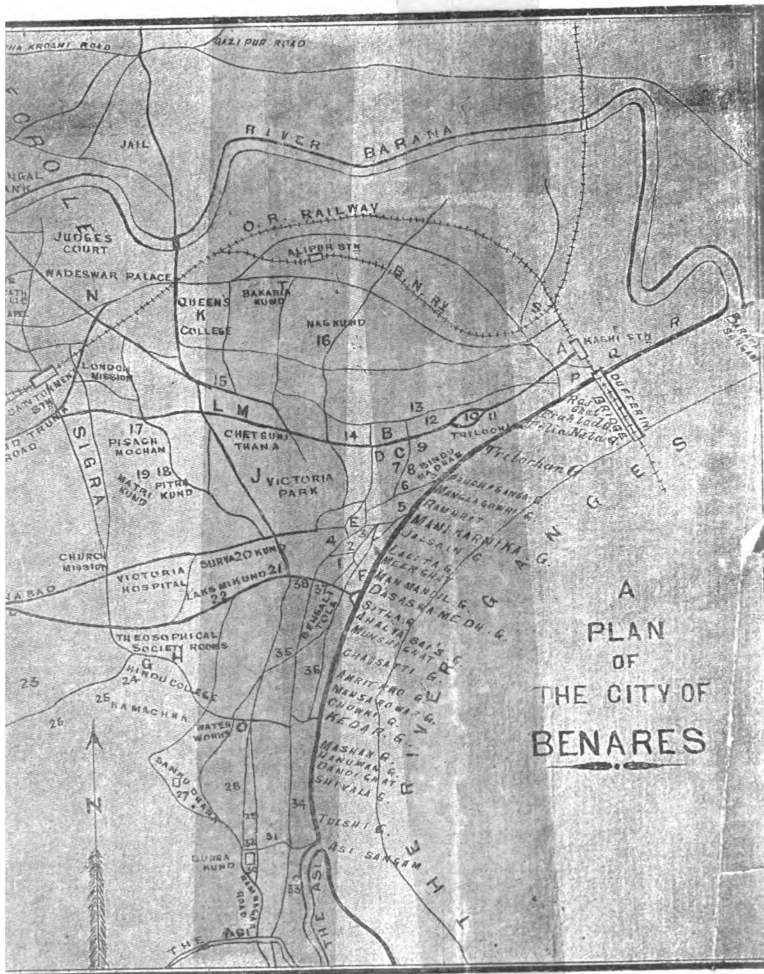
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A Kasi Station
B Municipal Garden
C Telegraph Office & Kotwali Police Station
D Alfred Town Hall
E The Chauk
F Man Mandil
G Central Hindu College
H Theosophical Society
J Victoria Park
K Queen's College
L Kabir Chaura & Madhu Das's Garden
M Prince of Wales' Hospital & Iswari Prosad Hospital
N Nadeswar Palace
O Bhelupura Jain Temples
P Ganj-Sahida-ka Mosque
Q Lal Khan's Tomb
R Raj Ghat Plateau
S Lat Bhairo
T Bakaria Kund

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1 Annapurna
2 Visweswara (Golden Temple)
3 Jnan Bapi—Aurangzeb's Mosque
4 Adi-Visweswara
5 Sankata Devi
6 Gopal Mandir
7 Bhaironath—Naugraha
8 Dandapani—Kalkup
9 Trailanga Swami's Muth
10 Machhchodari Tirth
11 Kameswara
12 Kirtibasseswara—Ratneswara—Alamgiri Mosque
13 Briddhakaleswara—Mritunjaya
14 Bara Ganesh
15 Jageswara—Iswargangi Tank
16 Nag Kua
17 Pisach Mochan
18 Pitri Kund
19 Matri Kund
20 Surya Kund
21 Dhrubeswara
22 Laksmi Kund
23 Sankaracharya's Muth
24 Batuk Bhairab
25 Kamachcha Devi
26 Baidyanath
27 Sankudhara
28 Gurudham
29 Kumareswara
30 Durga Kund
31 Kurukshetra Talao
32 Bhaskaranand's Muth
33 Jagannath—Narasinha
34 Lolarka Kund
35 Til Bhandeswara
36 Man Sarowar
37 Agastya Kund
38 Godowlea Church

———o———


A PLAN OF THE CITY OF BENARES
RIVER BARANA
O. R. RAILWAY
B. N. RY
ALIPUR STN
KASHI STN
DUFFERIN BRIDGE
JAIL
JUDGES COURT
NADESWAR PALACE
QUEEN'S COLLEGE
BAKARIA KUND
NAGKUND
LONDON MISSION
CANTONMENT STN
PISACH MOCHAN
MATRI KUND
PITRA KUND
CHETGUNJ THANA
VICTORIA PARK
CHURCH MISSION
VICTORIA HOSPITAL
SURYA KUND
LAKSMIKUND
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY ROOMS
HINDU COLLEGE
KAMACHHA
WATER WORKS
SANKU DHARA
DURGA KUND
RAMNAGAR ROAD
THE ASI
ASI SANGAM
BENGALI TOLA
SIGRA
GAZI PUR ROAD
BARANA SANGAM
TRILOCHAN
BINDU MADHAB
PANCHAGANGA G.
MANGLAGOWRI G.
RAMGHAT
MANIKARNIKA G.
JALSAIN G.
LALITA G.
MEER GHAT
MAN MANDIL G.
DASASWAMEDH G.
SITLA G.
AHALYA BAI'S G.
MUNSHI GHAT
CHAUSATTI G.
AMRITRAO G.
MANSAROWAR G.
CHOWKI G.
KEDAR G.
MASHAN G.
HANUMAN G.
DANDI GHAT
SHIVALA G.
TULSHI G.
Raj Ghat
Prahlad G.
Telia Nala
Trilochun G.
THE RIVER GANGES
N

APPENDIX

A FIRMAN OF EMPEROR AURANGZEB [1]

IN course of my rambles at Benares during the latter part of last October (1910), while searching for materials for a certain work upon that great city, in which I am engaged, I happened to come across a document of a unique nature likely to be of much interest to the antiquarian and the historian alike. Messrs. Saeed Brothers, Photographers, of Benares gave me a photo-copy of a *firman* in Persian which they alleged to be a true and faithful reproduction of the original which purported to be an Imperial Decree addressed to one Abul Hossein by Emperor Aurangzeb and communicated through his son Sultan Muhammad Bahadoor.

All historians have up to time been almost unanimous in giving to Aurangzeb a character directly opposed to what would appear from the above document. He has been held to have been bitterly opposed to the Hindus as evidenced by his imposition of the *Jiziah* tax, and has further been reputed to have demolished numbers of Hindu temples at Benares and erected the mosque over the Pancha-Ganga

(1) Paper read at the monthly General Meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal at Calcutta on March 1, 1911.

Ghat in that city with the couple of tall minarets going by the name of *Madho-ji-ka-deora* upon the ruins of the old temple of Beni Madhav which he had destroyed. As it was, I confess, I could not but look upon the document in question without considerable suspicion. I therefore thought it proper to keep silence till I obtained satisfactory and authentic informations regarding the existence of the original. It was only on the 1st instant (February 1911), when I had been on another flying visit to Benares that I was enabled to get a sight of the original *firman* itself through the courtesy of Khan Bahadoor Sheik Muhammad Tyab, City Inspector of Police, Benares.

This gentleman who sent for the document from its present owner for my inspection, gave the following history in connection with its find :—

'In the Mangla Gauri Muhulla of this city lived a Brahman named Gopi Upadhyaya who died about fifteen years ago. This *firman* was in the custody of Gopi Upadhyaya. This man had no son, but had only a daughter. His daughter has a son named Mangal Pandey who also lives at Mangla Gauri now. Mangal Pandey had obtained the document from Gopi Upadhyaya along with his other papers. In April 1905 I held an enquiry under orders of the Magistrate of Benares in the matter of a complaint by Mangal Pandey. Mangal is a *ghatia* Brahman who sits on the river-bank to ply his business as a *ghatia pujari* to whose stall

bathers in the river resort for various religious observances and for purchasing various appurtenances of worship. *Bunniah* women, he had complained used to go to the place where he used to sit, and in accordance with a curious custom amongst them they would frequently set up a wailing and weeping there. Mangal complained that no one would frequent his *ghat* to bathe if they were allowed to continue their practice of weeping there in that way. There was thus a dispute between Mangal and the *Bunniahs*. I asked him to show me his documents, if he had any, to prove that he had any right to the portion of the *ghat* he occupied as alleged by him. He and his servant, one Babunandan, produced several papers before me and I found this *firman* among them. It has since then been all along in his possession.'

Such being the occasion when this precious deed was found as narrated by the Khan Bahadoor, I felt convinced of its authenticity and examined the document carefully and noticed that it was a piece of slightly yellowish old paper with a piece of thin linen pasted at the back leaving bare only a small portion 4½ × 4 inches containing writings and Sultan Muhammad's seal 1½ inch in diameter at the top. This document is in an excellent state of preservation and the handwriting is very distinct and legible and the letters bold and large. The whole is written in deep black ink excepting a small portion at the top 3″ × 2½″

inches written in red in an ornate style and enclosed within some lines in the form of an oblong in the middle at the top of the first page and to the left of the seal of Aurangzeb. It measures 2 feet 10½ inches by 1 feet 5½ inches. On the next page appears in smaller letters the note of despatch through Prince Sultan Muhammad Shah Bahadoor with his seal on the right. This seal has some numerals looking like some date, but are not very legible.

From the papers contributed by Prof. Jadu Nath Sarkar in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol II No. 6 (New Series)—1906, pp. 223-267, with copies of two other *firmans* of Emperor Aurangzeb in respect to certain Revenue Regulations and fiscal measures and certain rules for the guidance of Shaistha Khan in connection with the Government of Bengal, it would appear that this monarch was after all not exactly what he had been represented to be and that he was rather solicitous of ensuring peace and security to his subjects.

With a view that further researches may be made with respect to this matter by antiquarian experts, I quote below a rendering of the *firman* into English by Lieut-Colonel Dr. D. C. Phillot :

> Let Abu'l-Hasan worthy of favour and countenance trust to our royal bounty and let him know that, since in accordance with our innate kindness of disposition and natural benevolence the whole of our untiring energy and all our upright intentions

are engaged in promoting the public welfare and bettering the condition of all classes high and low, therefore in accordance with our holy Law we have decided that the ancient temples shall not be overthrown but that new ones shall not be built. In these days of our justice, information has reached our noble and most holy court that certain persons actuated by rancour and spite have harassed the Hindus resident in the town of Benares and a few other places in that neighbourhood, and also certain Brahmins, keepers of the temples, in whose charge those ancient temples are, and that they further desire to remove these Brahmins from their ancient office (and this intention of theirs causes distress to that community) therefore our Royal Command is that after the arrival of our lustrous order you should direct that in future no person shall in unlawful ways interfere or disturb the Brahmins and the other Hindus resident in those places, so that they may as before remain in their occupation and continue with peace of mind to offer up prayers for the continuance of our God-given Empire that is destined to last to all time. Consider this as an urgent matter. Dated 15th of Jumada-'s-Saniya A. H. 1064 (=A. D. 1653 or 4).

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Etc, Etc.

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ever a difficult and perilous task, but Mr. Sen......*has made his version with such success that there is little to show that it is not the work of an Englishman born and bred. He has reproduced, with as much sympathy as skill, the spirit of the original*, and here he is undoubtedly to be congratulated on not being an Englishman, for a book so charged with Hindu allusions and reminiscences could hardly be adequately translated by any one who was not himself a Hindu. We strongly recommend the little book......to the perusal of all who would wish to get some glimpse of the workings of the mind of a gifted and erudite Hindu......It must be said to the credit of Mr. Sen's translation that it enables even a Christian or a Mahomedan to comprehend the Hindu's preference......... Of the merits of the work as a literary composition, it is not for a foreigner to speak, even after the perusal of *a translation so manifestly competent and intelligent* as that of Mr. Sen. In that respect it has stood the test of the enthusiastic admiration of the writer's own country-men. But it is essentially a book which should be read by Englishmen and Englishwomen who are interested in modern India, in as much as it may give them some clue to the wonderful renascence of Hindu feeling in our own day. ....It is not given to many Europeans to xpress modern problems in terms of ancient legends and primeval imagination. The Hindu does it without any seeming difficulty, and Mr. Shastri......has done it with a touch of genius. With a little effort of sympathy it is easy to see that, to minds steeped in Hindu lore, this little book may seem like an inspired reconciliation of ancient stories with the perpetual puzzle, in the most modern shape, of the mystery of our common existence ......To read Mr. Sen's admirable little translation is, in short, to be carried into the atmosphere of the

Indian Epics, and to understand how these characteristic works of the Indian imagination retain their hold on the piety and admiration of modern Hindus. The readers will be rewarded by a glimpse into the mentality of modern Hinduism such as he may seek in vain in the laborious explanations of European scholars. Mr. Sen's little book *ought to be added to the library of everyone who takes an interest in Indian thought.*"

East and West, BOMBAY, December, 1909 :— "It is impossible not to admire the achievements of Indians who write books and leading articles in this second, this secular speech (English). Among such linguistic feats I would like to call the attention of readers outside Bengal to Mr. R. R. Sen's admirable and most interesting translation of Pandit Hara Prasad Shastri's "Triumph of Valmiki." The translation is a *tour de force* such as few Englishmen could have achieved in the success with which it suggests rather than renders the Hindu atmosphere in which the writer's imagination is steeped. I believe that it will give intense pleasure to Hindus not acquainted with the Bengali language. Even to an English reader, if he reads without prepossessions, and with an open mind, the book is full of suggestion and interest, especially as the Pandit has contrived to mingle some Christian imagery with purely indigenous modes of expression."

The Pioneer, ALLAHABAD, July 25, 1909 :— " English readers will welcome Mr. R. R. Sen's excellent translation of the well-known Bengali account of *The Triumph of Valmiki* by H. P. Shastri. Mr. Sen has *preserved the spirit of the original,* while he has clothed it in simple, direct English. The theme of this mythological story is the establishment of universal brotherhood

among men ...... The book recounts the progress of the world for many centuries, and is an interesting commentary on Indian Mythology...The sentiments of the book are elevated, but the style is never bombastic, never turgid. *The illustrations add to the value of the book.*"

The Indian Mirror, CALCUTTA, August 13, 1909 :—" In loftiness of conception and sublimity of diction the paper ranks with the best ever written in the Bengali language, and it has secured the writer undying fame. By translating this prose-poem into English. Mr. R. R. Sen, of the Chittagong Bar, has achieved no little distinction. *The rendering has been so skilfully made that, but for the explanation, one would take it for an original effort.* There is not the slightest trace of that jerk that, generally speaking, characterises a translated piece, nor is there the absence of *the sparkle of the original* which is also a feature of the process of decanting. Verily, as an appreciative critic has happily remarked, the " Triumph of Valmiki " is *a triumph of the translator's art as well.*"

Modern Review, CALCUTTA, February, 1910 :— "...The reader is transported from his age and country : like Dante under the guidance of Virgil he meets with the Titans and the Celestials, is whirled through systems of strange universe. Shastri's touch is fearless, broad, and easy, bespeaking the freshness and spontaneity of youth......*The translation is faithful* and enriched with notes on every Oriental word used. *Englishmen learning Bengali will find it easy to read the original with this translation at their elbow.*"

The Malabar Quarterly Review, TRIVENDRUM, September, 1909 :—" We are thankful

to Mr. R. R. Sen for favouring us with a copy of his *very excellent English translation of Valmikir Jaya*......There is *absolutely nothing in the body of the work before us to show that it is merely a translation and not an original production. Indeed the translator has brought to his task such naturalness and skill as to defy the eye of the critic in detecting a flaw in his English rendering* ...... The purpose of the story itself,...... is to prove the possibility of "the establishment of universal brotherhood among men through the instrumentality of the moral instead of the intellectual and physical forces" ...... the printing and get up of the work does credit to the printers and the book *contains some eight fine illustrations*. We have little hesitation in commending this book to the general reader who will certainly find it interesting and affording some food or thought as applicable to present-day conditions."

The Indu Prakash (Daily), BOMBAY, August 16, 1909 :—"The Triumph of Valmiki is a well got up volume brought out by Mr. R. R. Sen,..... The conception of the basis of the book is no doubt grandly and nobly planned with an admixture of the romantic and the picturesque............This brief summary will, we trust, give a general idea of the grandness of its conception, but still more unique and commendable seems to us the spirit, underlying it, of moral interpretation and romantic representation of some of the stirring and ever-elevating episodes of our national epics, suited to help and guide the solution of some of the most delicate and vexing problems—national as well as social—of the day. ......The book must be welcomed as a *laudable literary*

contribution to the cause of national regeneration. ......Both the incidents of the book and the scene of their working......afford ample scope for the most grand and picturesque descriptions and the most stirring and highly romantic flights of imagination. In some places, to wit, the course of Viswamitra's creation and his progress through mid-air, the reader is involuntarily reminded of the resplendent grandeur and sublime imagination of Milton. *The credit of the translator is in our opinion almost equal to the unique merits of the original* and we thoroughly agree in the remark of Principal Brajendra Nath Seal, that the book is a "*triumph of the translator's art as well*" *Mr. Sen's English rendering is most racy, elegant and happy, making the translation itself by no means an inconsiderable and independent production in English.* We cannot, therefore, conclude this review without complimenting Mr. Sen on his successful performance in this respect and further thanking him for the valuable service he has rendered in making such a unique book based upon a topic of all-absorbing national interest available to a wider class (English-knowing) of his fellow countrymen."

The Oriental Review, BOMBAY, July 21, 1909 :—"...*The Triumph of Valmiki* was originally written in Bengali by an eminent Bengali writer and was very highly spoken of by many critics, being considered almost an epic with its grandeur of design, sense of elemental freedom, intoxication of the creative imagination, and dramatic intensity of life and passion. Principal Seal, of the Cooch Behar College, in his New Essays in Criticism considered this book superior to such works as Gœthe's

Helena, De Quincey's Dream-fugue, and Richter's Dream of the Dead Christ, and said that the Bengali phantasmagory was sublime, not with the sublimity of Ossa and Olympus, but with that of the Himalayan range. The modern literary spirit is above everything cosmopolitan in the broad sense of the word. It cannot bear to see that a good book should remain confined to a limited circle of readers. Actuated by this spirit, Mr. R. R. Sen, pleader of Chittagong, has translated the book in English. The scene of the book opens with a vivid and magnificent description.........Victory falls to the robber-chief Valmiki who turns a penitent on hearing the song of brotherhood of Man sung by the spirits of the departed. While the others are bent upon evolving feelings of brotherhood by means of the intellectual and physical forces, Valmiki does that effectively by the same means which Christ, Zoroaster and Buddha had found so effective—the Gospel of Love. The book thus shows the ultimate triumph of the moral force as against the physical and intellectual forces. Though an allegorical phantasmagoria it possesses a human charm of its own and *holds the reader enthralled from beginning to end. The translator has succeeded in retaining the beauty of the original with his sweet diction and beauty of style. We can only say it is a great book well translated.* Printed on superior art paper *with handsome illustrations*, the price...is not much."

The Pioneer, ALLAHABAD, November 4th, 1909, (second notice, two columns):—"...Mr. Shastri's little book......is, in short, a prose-poem which is an allegory of the superiority of the moral and emotional forces over strength of will and strength of intellect. His translator has attempted a difficult, and in some

respects, an impossible task. The original is written by a Hindu for Hindus, and in a language rich in words borrowed from the Sanskrit Scriptures.........Mr. Sen has modestly attempted a fairly literal translation, and has so far succeeded that his version is fluent and readable. His rendering *will be useful not only to Europeans who may be interested in Bengali literature, but to Hindus in other parts of India*, who will no doubt be able to supply the ellipses and allusions which may present some difficulty to non-Hindus. To Europeans the chief interest of the book will probably consist in the fact that it is an expression of the neo-Hinduism, the curious renascence of Hindu sentiment under the stimulus of Western education which is one of the most marked features of our time......It is interesting, nevertheless, to see in what form the old Hindu legends linger in the minds of the most intelligent and enlightened Bengalis, forming a bond of union between Hindus such as Christianity hardly supplies in the case of the more positive and less emotional Western races. In Mr. Shastri's book it is easy to see that the name of the Ribhus carry some similar charm of association such as can hardly be possessed by the words of any foreign scripture. It is not argument and logic that can take the place of such haunting memories as these. The appeal must be to the elemental associations of our nature, and these to a Hindu born and bred, are inextricably linked with the phrases and legends for which Mr. Sen has striven, not unsuccessfully, to find an English clothing. In any case, Mr. Sen's little book is one which *may be read with pleasure and profit*. At times it *rises to heights of real eloquence*, and read sympathetically, it may serve to show how Hinduism s still one of the great living religions of the world.

although it is the survivor of a type of mythologies which have long been obsolete in the West"

United India and Native States, MADRAS, January, 1910 :—"Mr. Sen has done a great service to the Indian public ignorant of Bengali, in placing within their reach this magnificent monument of the Shastri's depth of thought, power of imagination, purity of sentiments and versatility of genius......The above is, in brief, the skeleton of the author's plot and the fabric into which he has woven these ideas, is worthy of the traditions of ancient India, the land of bright fancies and powerful imagination. Perhaps the song of the angels at the Nativity, suggested the song of the "Ribhus," but the author's presentation of it to his readers is extremely fascinating and is calculated to captivate the heart of the Hindu, trained for hundreds of generations to vibrate at the slightest touch of its stiffest chords by fingers only like those of the author...... The booklet is extremely interesting and edifying and will amply repay perusal and to the thinking people of this country in these days of unrest cannot fail to be an incentive to the adoption of a right course of thought and life. The English *translation is simply splendid* and *speaks volumes for the ability of the translator* in rendering into a foreign language, a vernacular work without allowing it to suffer by translation. The get-up of the book is admirable as also are the beautiful illustrations."

The Mahratta, POONA, September 26th, 1909:—"The book is happy reading. It is full of beautiful descriptions and choice expressions and shows to what height the imagination of a cultured Bengali rises......the conception of the book is highly imaginative—extremely poetic—and is well worth perusal."


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